THE MILLER'S HOLIDAY

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Drawn by R. Caton Woodville.

Don Quixote and the Windmill.

The Miller's Holiday

Short Stories from The Northwestern Miller

By Edward Everett Hale
Charles F. Lummis
James Lane Allen
Frank R. Stockton
Hamlin Garland
Octave Thanet
Howard Pyle
Robert Barr
O. Henry

Edited by Randolph Edgar

1920
The Miller Publishing Company
Minneapolis

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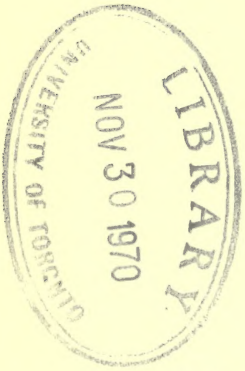

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PREFACE

On rainy afternoons the garret was an inviting place where neighbors' children often joined us in hastily improvised theatricals or in poring over forgotten books beneath the eaves. In the course of time an odd assortment of volumes found their way into the garret, crowded out as they were from the library shelves, and some of them, I believe, were heritage of another and older house with very much the same sort of garret and loved by equally inquisitive children as ourselves. Sometimes when the rain beat upon the roof we liked to imagine that the ghosts of readers followed the books of other days, and thereupon was invoked a fantastic game of shrill cries from darkened corners and, to the extreme discomfort of persons below, much stamping and scurrying across the bare floors.

From attic enlightenment ranging between a defunct treatise upon "Breakfast Dainties" and an illustrated Isaac Watts,—from this library of chance the Holiday Numbers of The Northwestern Miller were held by the children in high esteem. Particularly fascinating were the illustrations of certain verses by James Whitcomb Riley,—an enormous flea battling with a night-gowned miller,—or the Don Quixotic covers of embossed wind-mill tilting; pictures remembered long after the text had been forgotten.

Then;—"We skip twenty years," and the rain of many seasons patters over the deserted garret as dust collects on the books we knew. They were tumbled together when I found them again, some with broken backs and others wrought invertebrate by neglect, but the same intrepid miller glared at a monstrous and intelligent insect and Don Quixote, a trifle the worse for wear, wielded as of yore his futile lance.

Perhaps in renewing these friendships the chief interest has been in the discovery of the manner taken by many of

the contributors in "finding themselves"; Augustus Thomas, whose name appears in the first Holiday Number (1883) as the author of "The Miller's Daughter," is obviously the playwright and apparently unaware that narrative dress ill becomes his idea, while James Lane Allen alternates between pleasant verse and a discursive form of short story. The prevailing and altogether anachronistic suggestion of the contributions prior to 1890 is one of familiar faces daguerreotyped in their youth.

The Holiday Numbers of The Northwestern Miller were published at twelve Christmas seasons between 1883 and 1904, the intervals between these special issues being irregular. Unprecedented and never imitated in trade-journalism, The Northwestern Miller secured for the exclusive use of its columns the merited work of the best writers and illustrators of the day. Among the authors to contribute were Robert J. Burdette, "Bill" Nye, Edgar Fawcett, Charles King, Frank R. Stockton, James Lane Allen, Harry P. Robinson, James Whitcomb Riley, Howard Pyle, Edward Everett Hale, Hamlin Garland, O. Henry, Joaquin Miller, Julian Hawthorne, Eugene Field, Octave Thanet, Charles F. Lummis, Robert Barr, William Hamilton Osborne, Mary Hallock Foote, and Clement Scott.

No less distinguished were the contributing artists, among whose names we find: Oliver Herford, L. S. Ipsen, R. Caton Woodville, Harry Fenn, James Fagan, A. Zenope, Albert C. Sterner, F. X. Leyendecker, George E. Graves, George Varian, H. V. Rosenberg, Frederick Opper, Charles H. Stevens, J. L. Gerome Ferris, W. T. Thomson, William F. Kline, Victor J. Petry, Mary Hallock Foote, Alfred Lenz, L. Maynard Dixon, Charlotte Harding, Frederic Remington, John W. Norton, F. DeForest Schook, H. Cassiers, Frank Russell Green, Ralph Fletcher Seymour, Edward Potthast, Henry Hutt, E. L. Durand, Albert Levering and Howard Pyle.

The short stories of the present volume have been chosen almost at random, an exception being "The Christmas Wreck," written by Frank R. Stockton and originally published in The Northwestern Miller in 1885. In a recent anthology, "The Great Modern American Stories" (Boni

and Liveright), compiled by William Dean Howells, it was elected to a place among the twenty-four tales comprising the selection. "I have chosen one of the shipwrecks dear to Frank Stockton's whimsical humor," wrote Mr. Howells in the introduction, "and not the unique triumph which all the rest of the world likes best in 'The Lady and the Tiger.' I shall always believe that a large minority of his lovers will be with me in my choice of 'The Christmas Wreck.'"

August, 1920. *R. E.*

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Don Quixote and the Windmill . . . *Frontispiece*
Drawn by R. Caton Woodville

"He lay silent and still, with his face half buried in the sand." . . . . *Facing p. 100*
Drawn by Howard Pyle

"The Boers fired volley after volley." . . *Facing p. 194*
Drawn by Frank X. Leyendecker

THE CHURCH WITH AN OVERSHOT WHEEL*

By O. Henry

Lakelands is not to be found in the catalogues of fashionable summer resorts. It lies on a low spur of the Cumberland range of mountains on a little tributary of the Clinch River. Lakelands proper is a contented village of two dozen houses situated on a forlorn, narrow-gauge railroad line. You wonder whether the railroad lost itself in the pine woods and ran into Lakelands from fright and loneliness, or whether Lakelands got lost and huddled itself along the railroad to wait for the cars to carry it home. You wonder again why it was named Lakelands. There are no lakes, and the lands about it are too poor to be worth mentioning.

Half a mile from the village stands the Eagle House, a big, roomy old mansion run by Mr. Josiah Rankin for the accommodation of visitors who desire the mountain air at inexpensive rates. The Eagle House is delightfully mismanaged. It is full of ancient instead of modern improvements, and it is altogether as comfortably neglected and pleasingly disarranged as your own home. But you are furnished with clean rooms and good and abundant fare: yourself and the piny woods must do the rest. Nature has provided a mineral spring, grapevine swings and croquet—even the wickets are wooden. You have Art to thank only for the fiddle-and-guitar music twice a week at the hop in the rustic pavilion.

The patrons of the Eagle House are those who seek recreation as a necessity as well as a pleasure. They are busy people who may be likened to clocks that need a fort-

*Published in The Northwestern Miller 1904.

night's winding to insure a year's running of their wheels. You will find students there from the lower towns, now and then an artist, or a geologist absorbed in construing the ancient strata of the hills. A few quiet families spend the summers there; and often one or two tired members of that patient sisterhood known to Lakelands as "school-marms."

A quarter of a mile from the Eagle House was what would have been described to its guests as "an object of interest" in the catalogue, had the Eagle House issued a catalogue. This was an old, old mill that was no longer a mill. In the words of Mr. Josiah Rankin, it was "the only church in the United States, sah, with an overshot wheel; and the only mill in the world, sah, with pews and a pipe organ." The guests of the Eagle House attended the old mill church each Sabbath, and heard the preacher liken the purified Christian to bolted flour, ground to usefulness between the millstones of experience and suffering.

Every year about the beginning of autumn there came to the Eagle House one Mr. Abram Strong, who remained for a time an honored and beloved guest. In Lakelands he was called "Father Abram," because his hair was so white, his face so strong and kind and florid, his laugh so merry and his black clothes and broad hat so priestly in appearance. Even new guests after three or four days' acquaintance gave him this familiar title.

Father Abram came a long way to Lakelands. He lived in a big, roaring town in the Northwest where he owned mills—not little mills with pews and an organ in them, but great, ugly, mountain-like mills that the freight trains crawled around all day like ants around an ant heap. And now you must be told about Father Abram and the mill that was a church, for their stories run together.

In the days when the church was a mill, Mr. Strong was the miller. There was no jollier, dustier, busier, happier miller in all the land than he. He lived in a little cottage across the road from the mill. His hand was heavy but his toll was light, and the mountaineers brought their grain to him across many weary miles of rocky roads.

The delight of the miller's life was his little daughter,

Aglaia. That was a brave name, truly, for a flaxen-haired toddler; but the mountaineers love sonorous and stately names. The mother had encountered it somewhere in a book, and the deed was done. In her babyhood Aglaia herself repudiated the name as far as common use went, and persisted in calling herself "Dums." The miller and his wife often tried to coax from Aglaia the source of this mysterious name, but without results. At last they arrived at a theory. In the little garden behind the cottage was a bed of rhododendrons in which the child took a peculiar delight and interest. It may have been that she perceived in "Dums" a kinship to the formidable name of her favorite flowers.

When Aglaia was four years old she and her father used to go through a little performance in the mill every afternoon, that never failed to come off, the weather permitting. When supper was ready her mother would brush her hair and put on a clean apron and send her across to the mill to bring her father home. When the miller saw her coming in the mill door he would come forward, all white with the flour dust, and wave his hand and sing an old miller's song that was familiar in those parts and ran something like this:

"The wheel goes round,
The grist is ground,
The dusty miller's merry.
He sings all day,
His work is play,
While thinking of his dearie."

Then Aglaia would run to him laughing, and call "Da-da, come take Dums home"; and the miller would swing her to his shoulder and march over to supper, singing the miller's song. Every evening this would take place.

One day, only a week after her fourth birthday, Aglaia disappeared. When last seen she was plucking wild flowers by the side of the road in front of the cottage. A little while later her mother went out to see that she did not stray too far away, and she was already gone.

Of course every effort was made to find her. The neighbors gathered, and searched the woods and the mountains

for miles around. They dragged every foot of the mill race and the creek for a long distance below the dam. Never a trace of her did they find. A night or two before there had been a family of wanderers camped in a grove near by. It was conjectured that they might have stolen the child; but when their wagon was overtaken and searched she could not be found.

The miller remained at the mill for nearly two years; and then his hope of finding her died out. He and his wife moved to the Northwest. In a few years he was the owner of a modern mill in one of the important milling cities in that region. Mrs. Strong never recovered from the shock caused by the loss of Aglaia, and two years after they moved away the miller was left to bear his sorrow alone.

When Abram Strong became prosperous he paid a visit to Lakelands and the old mill. The scene was a sad one for him, but he was a strong man, and always appeared cheery and kindly. It was then that he was inspired to convert the old mill into a church. Lakelands was too poor to build one; and the still poorer mountaineers could not assist. There was no place of worship nearer than twenty miles.

The miller altered the appearance of the mill as little as possible. The big overshot wheel was left in its place. The young people who came to the church used to cut their initials in its soft and slowly decaying wood. The dam was partly destroyed, and the clear mountain stream rippled unchecked down its rocky bed. Inside the mill the changes were greater. The shafts and millstones and belts and pulleys were, of course, all removed. There were two rows of benches with aisles between, and a little raised platform and pulpit at one end. On three sides overhead was a gallery containing seats, and reached by a stairway inside. There was also an organ—a real pipe organ—in the gallery, that was the pride of the congregation of the Old Mill church. Miss Phœbe Summers was the organist. The Lakelands boys proudly took turns at pumping it for her at each Sunday's service. The Rev. Mr. Banbridge was the preacher, and rode down from Squirrel Gap on his old white horse without ever missing a service. And Abram Strong

paid for everything. He paid the preacher five hundred dollars a year; and Miss Phœbe two hundred.

Thus, in memory of Aglaia, the old mill was converted into a blessing for the community in which she had once lived. It seemed that the brief life of the child had brought about more good than the threescore years and ten of many. But Abram Strong set up yet another monument to her memory.

Out from his mills in the Northwest came the "Aglaia" flour, made from the hardest and finest wheat that could be raised. The country soon found out that the "Aglaia" flour had two prices. One was the highest market price, and the other was—nothing.

Wherever there happened a calamity that left people destitute—a fire, a flood, a tornado, a strike or a famine, there would go hurrying a generous consignment of the "Aglaia" at its "nothing" price. It was given away cautiously and judiciously, but it was freely given, and not a penny could the hungry ones pay for it. There got to be a saying that whenever there was a disastrous fire in the poor districts of a city the fire chief's buggy reached the scene first, and next the "Aglaia" flour wagon, and then the fire engines.

So this was Abram Strong's other monument to Aglaia. Perhaps to a poet the theme may seem too utilitarian for beauty; but to some the fancy will seem sweet and fine that the pure, white, virgin flour flying on its mission of love and charity might be likened to the spirit of the lost child whose memory it signalized.

There came a year that brought hard times to the Cumberlands. Grain crops everywhere were light; and there were no local crops at all. Mountain floods had done much damage to property. Even game in the woods was so scarce that the hunters brought hardly enough home to keep their folk alive. Especially about Lakelands was the rigor felt.

As soon as Abram Strong heard of this his messages flew; and the little narrow-gauge cars began to unload "Aglaia" flour there. The miller's orders were to store the flour in the gallery of the Old Mill church; and that every one who attended the church was to carry home a sack of it.

Two weeks after that Abram Strong came for his yearly visit to the Eagle House, and became "Father Abram" again.

That season the Eagle House had fewer guests than usual. Among them was Rose Chester. Miss Chester came to Lakelands from Atlanta, where she worked in a department store. This was the first vacation outing of her life. The wife of the store manager had once spent a summer at the Eagle House. She had taken a fancy to Rose, and had persuaded her to go there for her three weeks' holiday. The manager's wife gave her a letter to Mrs. Rankin, who gladly received her in her own charge and care.

Miss Chester was not very strong. She was about twenty, and pale and delicate from an indoor life. But one week of Lakelands gave her a brightness and spirit that changed her wonderfully. The time was early September when the Cumberlands are at their greatest beauty. The mountain foliage was growing brilliant with autumnal colors, one breathed aërial champagne, the nights were deliciously cool, causing one to snuggle cosily under the warm blankets of the Eagle House.

Father Abram and Miss Chester became great friends. The old miller learned her story from Mrs. Rankin, and his interest went out quickly to the slender, lonely girl who was making her own way in the world.

The mountain country was new to Miss Chester. She had lived many years in the warm, flat town of Atlanta; and the grandeur and variety of the Cumberlands delighted her. She was determined to enjoy every moment of her stay. Her little hoard of savings had been estimated so carefully in connection with her expenses that she knew almost to a penny what her very small surplus would be when she returned to work.

Miss Chester was fortunate in gaining Father Abram for a friend and companion. He knew every road and peak and slope of the mountains near Lakelands. Through him she became acquainted with the solemn delight of the shadowy, tilted aisles of the pine forests, the dignity of the bare crags, the crystal, tonic mornings, the dreamy, golden afternoons full of mysterious sadness. So, her health

improved, and her spirits grew light. She had a laugh as genial and hearty in its feminine way as the famous laugh of Father Abram. Both of them were natural optimists; and both knew how to present a serene and cheerful face to the world.

One day Miss Chester learned from one of the guests the history of Father Abram's lost child. Quickly she hurried away and found the miller seated on his favorite rustic bench near the chalybeate spring. He was surprised when his little friend slipped her hand into his, and looked at him with tears in her eyes.

"Oh, Father Abram," she said, "I'm so sorry! I didn't know until today about your little daughter. You will find her yet some day—Oh, I hope you will."

The miller looked down at her with his strong, ready smile.

"Thank you, Miss Rose," he said, in his usual cheery tones. "But I do not expect to find Aglaia. For a few years I hoped that she had been stolen by vagrants, and that she still lived; but I have lost that hope. I believe that she was drowned."

"I can understand," said Miss Chester, "how the doubt must have made it so hard to bear. And yet you are so cheerful and so ready to make other people's burdens light. Good Father Abram!"

"Good Miss Rose!" mimicked the miller, smiling. "Who thinks of others more than you do?"

A whimsical mood seemed to strike Miss Chester.

"Oh, Father Abram," she cried, "wouldn't it be grand if I should prove to be your daughter? Wouldn't it be romantic? And wouldn't you like to have me for a daughter?"

"Indeed I would," said the miller, heartily. "If Aglaia had lived I could wish for nothing better than for her to have grown up to be just such a little woman as you are. Maybe you are Aglaia," he continued, falling in with her playful mood; "can't you remember when we lived at the mill?"

Miss Chester fell swiftly into serious meditation. Her

large eyes were fixed vaguely upon something in the distance. Father Abram was amused at her quick return to seriousness. She sat thus for a long time before she spoke.

"No," she said at length, with a long sigh, "I can't remember anything at all about a mill. I don't think that I ever saw a flour mill in my life until I saw your funny little church. And if I were your little girl I would remember it, wouldn't I? I'm so sorry, Father Abram."

"So am I," said Father Abram, humoring her. "But if you cannot remember that you are my little girl, Miss Rose, surely you can recollect being some one else's. You remember your own parents, of course."

"Oh, yes; I remember them very well—especially my father. He wasn't a bit like you, Father Abram. Oh, I was only making believe. Come, now, you've rested long enough. You promised to show me the pool where you can see the trout playing, this afternoon. I never saw a trout."

Late one afternoon Father Abram set out for the old mill alone. He often went there to sit and think of the old days when he lived in the cottage across the road. Time had smoothed away the sharpness of his grief until he no longer found the memory of those times painful. But whenever Abram Strong sat in the melancholy September afternoons on the spot where "Dums" used to run in every day with her yellow curls flying, the smile that Lakelands always saw upon his face was not there.

The miller made his way slowly up the winding, steep road. The trees crowded so close to the edge of it that he walked in their shade, with his hat in his hand. Squirrels ran playfully upon the old rail fence at his right. Quails were calling to their young broods in the wheat stubble. The low sun sent a torrent of pale gold up the ravine that opened to the west. Early September!—it was within a few days only of the anniversary of Aglaia's disappearance.

The old overshot wheel, half covered with mountain ivy, caught patches of the warm sunlight filtering through the trees. The cottage across the road was still standing, but it would doubtless go down before the next winter's

mountain blasts. It was overrun with morning-glory and wild gourd vines; and the door hung by one hinge.

Father Abram pushed open the mill door, and entered softly. And then he stood still, wondering. He heard the sound of some one within, weeping inconsolably. He looked, and saw Miss Chester sitting in a dim pew, with her head bowed upon an open letter that her hands held.

Father Abram went to her, and laid one of his strong hands firmly upon hers. She looked up, breathed his name, and tried to speak further.

"Not yet, Miss Rose," said the miller, kindly. "Don't try to talk yet. There's nothing as good for you as a nice, quiet little cry when you are feeling blue."

It seemed that the old miller, who had known so much sorrow himself, was a magician in driving it away from others. Miss Chester's sobs grew easier. Presently she took her little plain-bordered handkerchief and wiped away a drop or two that had fallen from her eyes upon Father Abram's big hand. Then she looked up and smiled through her tears. Miss Chester could always smile before her tears had dried, just as Father Abram could smile through his own grief. In that way the two were very much alike.

The miller asked her no questions; but by and by Miss Chester began to tell him.

It was the old story that always seems so big and important to the young, and that brings reminiscent smiles to their elders. Love was the theme, as may be supposed. There was a young man in Atlanta, full of all goodness and the graces, who had discovered that Miss Chester also possessed these qualities above all other people in Atlanta or anywhere else from Greenland to Patagonia. She showed Father Abram the letter over which she had been weeping. It was a manly, tender letter, a little superlative and urgent, after the style of love letters written by young men full of goodness and the graces. He proposed for Miss Chester's hand in marriage at once. Life, he said, since her departure for a three weeks' visit, was not to be endured. He begged for an immediate answer; and if it were favorable he promised to fly—ignoring the narrow-gauge railroad—at once to Lakelands.

"And now where does the trouble come in?" asked the miller when he had read the letter.

"I cannot marry him," said Miss Chester.

"Do you want to marry him?" asked Father Abram.

"Oh, I love him," she answered, "but—." Down went her head and she sobbed again.

"Come, Miss Rose," said the miller; "you can give me your confidence. I do not question you, but I think you can trust me."

"I do trust you," said the girl. "I will tell you why I must refuse Ralph. I am nobody—I haven't even a name —the name I call myself is a lie. Ralph is a noble man. I love him with all my heart, but I can never be his."

"What talk is this?" said Father Abram. "You said that you remember your parents. Why do you say you have no name? I do not understand."

"I do remember them," said Miss Chester. "I remember them too well. My first recollections are of our life somewhere in the far South. We moved many times to different towns and states. I have picked cotton, and worked in factories, and have often gone without enough food and clothes. My mother was sometimes good to me; my father was always cruel, and beat me. I think they were both idle and unsettled.

"One night when we were living in a little town on a river near Atlanta they had a great quarrel. It was while they were abusing and taunting each other that I learned —oh, Father Abram, I learned that I didn't even have the right to be—don't you understand?—I had no right even to a name—I was nobody.

"I ran away that night. I walked to Atlanta and found work. I gave myself the name of Rose Chester, and have earned my own living ever since. Now you know why I cannot marry Ralph—and oh, I can never tell him why."

Better than any sympathy, more helpful than pity, was Father Abram's depreciation of her woes.

"Why, dear, dear! is that all?" he said. "Fie, fie! I thought something was in the way. If this perfect young man is a man at all he will not care a pinch of bran for your family tree. Dear Miss Rose, take my word for it, it

is yourself he cares for. Tell him frankly, just as you have told me, and I'll warrant that he will laugh at your story, and think all the more of you for it."

"I shall never tell him," said Miss Chester, sadly. "And I shall never marry him or any one else. I have not the right."

But they saw a long shadow come bobbing up the sunlit road. And then came a shorter one bobbing by its side; and presently two strange figures approached the church. The long shadow was made by Miss Phœbe Summers, the organist, come to practice. Tommy Teague, aged twelve, was responsible for the shorter shadow. It was Tommy's day to pump the organ for Miss Phœbe, and his bare toes proudly spurned the dust of the road.

Miss Phoebe, in her lilac spray chintz dress, with her accurate little curls hanging over each ear, courtesied low to Father Abram, and shook her curls ceremoniously at Miss Chester. Then she and her assistant climbed the steep stairway to the organ loft.

In the gathering shadows below, Father Abram and Miss Chester lingered. They were silent; and it is likely that they were busy with their memories. Miss Chester sat, leaning her head on her hand, with her eyes fixed far away. Father Abram stood in the next pew, looking thoughtfully out of the door at the road and the ruined cottage.

Suddenly the scene was transformed for him back almost a score of years into the past. For, as Tommy pumped away, Miss Phœbe struck a low bass note on the organ and held it to test the volume of air that it contained. The church ceased to exist, so far as Father Abram was concerned. The deep, booming vibration that shook the little frame building was no note from an organ, but the humming of the mill machinery. He felt sure that the old overshot wheel was turning; that he was back again, a dusty, merry miller in the old mountain mill. And now evening was come, and soon would come Aglaia with flying curls, toddling across the road to take him home to supper. Father Abram's eyes were fixed upon the broken door of the cottage.

And then came another wonder. In the gallery overhead the sacks of flour were stacked in long rows. Perhaps a mouse had been at one of them; anyway the jar of the deep organ note shook down between the cracks of the gallery floor a stream of flour, covering Father Abram from head to foot with the white dust. And then the old miller stepped into the aisle, and waved his arms and began to sing the miller's song:

"The wheel goes round,
The grist is ground,
The dusty miller's merry—"

And then the rest of the miracle happened. Miss Chester was leaning forward from her pew, as pale as the flour itself, her wide-open eyes staring at Father Abram like one in a waking dream. When he began the song she stretched out her arms to him; her lips moved; she called to him in dreamy tones: "Da-da, come take Dums home!"

Miss Phœbe released the low key of the organ. But her work had been well done. The note that she struck had beaten down the doors of a closed memory; and Father Abram held his lost Aglaia close in his arms.

When you visit Lakelands they will tell you more of this story. They will tell you how the lines of it were afterward traced, and the history of the miller's daughter revealed after the gypsy wanderers had stolen her on that September day, attracted by her childish beauty. But you should wait until you sit comfortably on the shaded porch of the Eagle House, and then you can have the story at your ease. It seems best that our part of it should close while Miss Phœbe's deep bass note was yet reverberating softly.

And yet, to my mind, the finest thing of it all happened while Father Abram and his daughter were walking back to the Eagle House in the long twilight, almost too glad to speak.

"Father," she said, somewhat timidly and doubtfully, "have you a great deal of money?"

"A great deal?" said the miller. "Well, that depends. There is plenty unless you want to buy the moon or something equally expensive."

"Would it cost very, very much," asked Aglaia, who had always counted her dimes so carefully, "to send a telegram to Atlanta?"

"Ah," said Father Abram, with a little sigh, "I see. You want to ask Ralph to come."

Aglaia looked up at him with a tender smile.

"I want to ask him to wait," she said. "I have just found my father, and I want it to be just we two for a while. I want to tell him he will have to wait."

CAPTAIN SCARFIELD*

By Howard Pyle

PREFACE

The author of this narrative cannot recall that, in any history of the famous pirates, he has ever read a detailed and sufficient account of the life and death of Captain John Scarfield. Doubtless some data concerning his death and the destruction of his schooner might be gathered from the report of Lieutenant Mainwaring, now filed in the archives of the Navy department, but beyond such bald and bloodless narrative the author knows of nothing, unless it be the little chap-book history published by Isaiah Thomas in Newburyport about the year 1821-22, entitled, "A True History of the Life and Death of Captain Jack Scarfield." This lack of particularity in the history of one so notable in his profession it is the design of the present narrative in a measure to supply, and, if the author has seen fit to cast it in the form of a fictional story, it is only that it may make more easy reading for those who see fit to follow the tale from this to its conclusion.

I

Eleazer Cooper, or Captain Cooper, as was his better-known title in Philadelphia, was a prominent member of the Society of Friends. He was an overseer of the meeting and an occasional speaker upon particular occasions. When at home from one of his many voyages he never failed to occupy his seat in the meeting, both on First Day and Fifth Day, and he was regarded by his fellow-townsmen as a model of business integrity and of domestic responsibility.

More incidental to this story, however, it is to be narrated that Captain Cooper was one of those trading skippers who carried their own merchandise in their own vessels, which they sailed themselves, and on whose decks they did their own bartering. His vessel was a swift, large schooner, the *Eliza Cooper of Philadelphia,* named for his wife. His cruising grounds were the West India islands, and his mer-

*Published in The Northwestern Miller 1900.

chandise was flour and corn meal ground at the Brandywine Mills at Wilmington, Delaware.

During the War of 1812 he had earned, as was very well known, an extraordinary fortune in this trading; for flour and corn meal sold at fabulous prices in the French, Spanish, Dutch and Danish islands, cut off, as they were, from the rest of the world by the British blockade.

The running of this blockade was one of the most hazardous maritime ventures possible, but Captain Cooper had met with such unvaried success, and had sold his merchandise at such incredible profit that, at the end of the war, he found himself to have become one of the wealthiest merchants of his native city.

It was known at one time that his balance in the Mechanics' Bank was greater than that of any other individual depositor upon the books, and it was told of him that he had once deposited in the bank a chest of foreign silver coin, the exchanged value of which, when translated into American currency, was upwards of forty-two thousand dollars—a prodigious sum of money in those days.

In person, Captain Cooper was tall and angular of frame. His face was thin and severe, wearing continually an unsmiling, masklike expression of continent and unruffled sobriety. His manner was dry and taciturn, and his conduct and life were measured to the most absolute accord with the teachings of his religious belief.

He lived in an old-fashioned house on Front Street below Spruce—as pleasant, cheerful a house as ever a trading captain could return to. At the back of the house a lawn sloped steeply down toward the river. To the south stood the wharf and storehouses; to the north an orchard and kitchen garden bloomed with abundant verdure. Two large chestnut trees sheltered the porch and the little space of lawn, and when you sat under them in the shade you looked down the slope between two rows of box bushes directly across the shining river to the Jersey shore.

At the time of our story—that is, about the year 1820—this property had increased very greatly in value, but it was the old home of the Coopers, as Eleazer Cooper was entirely rich enough to indulge his fancy in such matters.

Accordingly, as he chose to live in the same house where his father and his grandfather had dwelt before him, he peremptorily, if quietly, refused all offers looking toward the purchase of the lot of ground—though it was now worth five or six times its former value.

As was said, it was a cheerful, pleasant home, impressing you when you entered it with the feeling of spotless and all-pervading cleanliness—a cleanliness that greeted you in the shining brass doorknocker; that entertained you in the sitting-room with its stiff, leather-covered furniture, the brass-headed tacks whereof sparkled like so many stars—a cleanliness that bade you farewell in the spotless stretch of sand-sprinkled hallway, the wooden floor of which was worn into knobs around the nailheads by the countless scourings and scrubbings to which it had been subjected, and which left behind them an all-pervading faint, fragrant odor of soap and warm water.

Eleazer Cooper and his wife were childless, but one inmate made the great, silent, shady house bright with life. Lucinda Fairbanks, a niece of Captain Cooper's by his only sister, was a handsome, sprightly girl of eighteen or twenty, and a great favorite in the Quaker society of the city.

It remains only to introduce the final, and perhaps the most important, actor of the narrative—Lieutenant James Mainwaring. During the past twelve months or so he had been a frequent visitor at the Cooper house. At this time he was a broad-shouldered, red-cheeked, stalwart fellow of twenty-six or twenty-eight. He was a great social favorite, and possessed the added romantic interest of having been aboard the Constitution when she fought the Guerriere, and of having, with his own hands, touched the match that fired the first gun of that great battle.

Mainwaring's mother and Eliza Cooper had always been intimate friends, and the coming and going of the young man during his leave of absence was looked upon in the house as quite a matter of course. Half a dozen times a week he would drop in to execute some little commission for the ladies, or, if Captain Cooper was at home, to smoke a pipe of tobacco with him, to sip a dram of his famous old Jamaica rum, or to play a rubber of checkers of an evening.

It is not likely that either of the older people were the least aware of the real cause of his visits; still less did they suspect that any passages of sentiment had passed between the young people.

The truth was that Mainwaring and the young lady were very deeply in love. It was a love that they were obliged to keep a profound secret, for not only had Eleazer Cooper held the strictest sort of testimony against the late war—a testimony so rigorous as to render it altogether unlikely that one of so military a profession as Mainwaring practiced could hope for his consent to a suit for marriage, but Lucinda could not have married one not a member of the Society of Friends without losing her own birthright membership therein. She herself might not attach much weight to such a loss of membership in the Society, but her fear of, and her respect for, her uncle led her to walk very closely in her path of duty in this respect. Accordingly she and Mainwaring met as they could,—clandestinely,—and the stolen moments were very sweet. With equal secrecy Lucinda had, at the request of her lover, sat for a miniature portrait to Mrs. Gregory, which miniature, set in a gold medallion, Mainwaring, with a mild, sentimental pleasure, wore hung around his neck and beneath his shirt frill next his heart.

In the month of April of the year 1820 Mainwaring received orders to report at Washington. During the preceding autumn the West India pirates, and notably Captain Jack Scarfield, had been more than usually active, and the loss of the packet *Marblehead* (which, sailing from Charleston, South Carolina, was never heard of more) was attributed to them. Two other coasting vessels off the coast of Georgia had been looted and burned by Scarfield, and the government had at last aroused itself to the necessity of active measures for repressing these pests of the West India waters.

Mainwaring received orders to take command of the *Yankee,* a swift, light-draft, heavily-armed brig of war, and to cruise about the Bahama Islands and to capture and destroy all the pirates' vessels he could there discover.

On his way from Washington to New York, where the

Yankee was then waiting orders, Mainwaring stopped in Philadelphia to bid good-by to his many friends in that city. He called at the old Cooper house. It was on a Sunday afternoon. The spring was early and the weather extremely pleasant that day, being filled with a warmth almost as of summer. The apple trees were already in full bloom, and filled all the air with their fragrance. Everywhere there seemed to be the pervading hum of bees, and the drowsy, tepid sunshine was very delightful.

At that time Eleazer was just home from an unusually successful voyage to Antigua. Mainwaring found the family sitting under one of the still leafless chestnut trees, Captain Cooper smoking his long, clay pipe and lazily perusing a copy of the National Gazette. Eleazer listened with a great deal of interest to what Mainwaring had to say of his proposed cruise. He himself knew a great deal about the pirates, and singularly unbending from his normal, stiff taciturnity, he began telling of what he knew, particularly of Captain Scarfield—in whom he appeared to take an extraordinary interest.

Vastly to Mainwaring's surprise, the old Quaker assumed the position of a defendant of the pirates, protesting that the wickedness of the accused was enormously exaggerated. He declared that he knew some of the freebooters very well, and that at the most they were poor, misdirected wretches who had, by easy gradation, slid into their present evil ways from having been tempted by the government authorities to enter into privateering in the days of the late war. He conceded that Captain Scarfield had done many cruel and wicked deeds, but he averred that he had also performed many kind and benevolent actions. The world made no note of these latter, but took care only to condemn the evil that had been done. He acknowledged that it was true that the pirate had allowed his crew to cast lots for the wife and the daughter of the skipper of the *Northern Rose,* but there were none of his accusers who told how, at the risk of his own life and the lives of all his crew, he had given succor to the schooner *Halifax,* found adrift with all hands down with yellow fever. There was no defender of his actions to tell how he and his crew of

pirates had sailed the pest-stricken vessel almost into the rescuing waters of Kingston harbor.

Eleazer confessed that he could not deny that when Scarfield had tied the skipper of the *Baltimore Belle* naked to the foremast of his own brig he had permitted his crew of cut-throats (who were drunk at the time) to throw bottles at the helpless captive, who died that night of the wounds he had received. For this he was doubtless very justly condemned, but who was there to praise him when he had, at the risk of his life and in the face of the authorities, carried a cargo of provisions which he himself had purchased at Tampa Bay to the island of Bella Vista after the great hurricane of 1818? In this notable adventure he had barely escaped, after a two days' chase, the British frigate *Ceres,* whose captain, had a capture been effected, would instantly have hung the unfortunate man to the yard-arm in spite of the beneficent mission he was in the act of conducting.

In all this Eleazer had the air of conducting the case for the defendant. As he talked he became more and more animated and voluble. The light went out in his tobacco pipe, and a hectic spot appeared in either thin and sallow cheek. Mainwaring sat wondering to hear the severely peaceful Quaker preacher defending so notoriously bloody and cruel a cutthroat pirate as Captain Jack Scarfield. The warm and innocent surroundings, the old brick house looking down upon them, the odor of apple blossoms and the hum of bees seemed to make it all the more incongruous. And still the elderly Quaker skipper talked on and on with hardly an interruption, till the warm sun slanted to the west and the day began to decline.

That evening Mainwaring stayed to tea, and when he parted from Lucinda Fairbanks it was after nightfall, with a clear, round moon shining in the milky sky and a radiance pallid and unreal enveloping the old house, the blooming apple trees, the sloping lawn and the shining river beyond. He implored his sweetheart to let him tell her uncle and aunt of their acknowledged love and to ask the old man's consent to it, but she would not permit him to do so. They were so happy as they were; who knew but what her uncle

might forbid their fondness? Would he not wait a little longer? Maybe it would all come right after a while. She was so fond, so tender, so tearful at the nearness of their parting that he had not the heart to insist. At the same time it was with a feeling almost of despair that he realized that he must now be gone—maybe for the space of two years—without in all that time possessing the right to call her his before the world.

When he bade farewell to the older people it was with a choking feeling of bitter disappointment. He yet felt the pressure of her cheek against his shoulder, the touch of soft and velvet lips to his own. But what were such clandestine endearments compared to what might, perchance, be his—the right of calling her his own when he was far away and upon the distant sea? And, besides, he felt like a coward who had shirked his duty.

But he was very much in love. The next morning appeared in a drizzle of rain that followed the beautiful warmth of the day before. He had the coach all to himself, and in the damp and leathery solitude he drew out the little oval picture from beneath his shirt frill and looked long and fixedly with a fond and foolish joy at the innocent face, the blue eyes, the red, smiling lips depicted upon the satin-like, ivory surface.

II

For the better part of five months Mainwaring cruised about in the waters surrounding the Bahama Islands. In that time he ran to earth and dispersed a dozen nests of pirates. He destroyed no less than fifteen piratical crafts of all sizes, from a large half-decked whaleboat to a three-hundred-ton barkentine. The name of the *Yankee* became a terror to every sea wolf in the western tropics, and the waters of the Bahama Islands became swept almost clean of the gory wretches who had so lately infested it.

But the one freebooter of all others whom he sought—Captain Jack Scarfield—seemed to evade him like a shadow, to slip through his fingers like magic. Twice he came almost within touch of the famous marauder, both times in

the ominous wrecks that the pirate captain had left behind him. The first of these was the water-logged remains of a burned and still smoking wreck that he found adrift in the great Bahama channel. It was the *Water Witch of Salem,* but he did not learn her tragic story until, two weeks later, he discovered a part of her crew at Port Maria, on the north coast of Jamaica. It was, indeed, a dreadful story to which he listened. The castaways said that they of all the vessel's crew had been spared so that they might tell the commander of the *Yankee,* should they meet him, that he might keep what he found, with Captain Scarfield's compliments, who served it up to him hot cooked.

Three weeks later he rescued what remained of the crew of the blood-stained hulk of the *Baltimore Belle,* eight of whose crew, headed by the captain, had been tied hand and foot and hove overboard. Again, there was a message from Captain Scarfield to the commander of the *Yankee* that he might season what he found to suit his own taste.

Mainwaring was of a sanguine disposition, with fiery temper. He swore, with the utmost vehemence, that either he or John Scarfield would have to leave the earth.

He had little suspicion of how soon was to befall the ominous realization of his angry prophecy.

At that time one of the chief rendezvous of the pirates was the little island of San Jose, one of the southernmost of the Bahama group. Here, in the days before the coming of the *Yankee,* they were wont to put in to clean their vessels and to take in a fresh supply of provisions, gunpowder and rum, preparatory to renewing their attacks upon the peaceful commerce circulating up and down outside the islands, or through the wide stretches of the Bahama channel.

Mainwaring had made several descents upon this nest of freebooters. He had already made two notable captures, and it was here he hoped eventually to capture Captain Scarfield himself.

A brief description of this one-time notorious rendezvous of freebooters might not be out of place. It consisted of a little settlement of those wattled and mud-smeared houses such as you find through the West Indies. There were only three houses of a more pretentious sort, built of wood. One

of these was a storehouse, another was a rumshop, and a third a house in which dwelt a mulatto woman, who was reputed to be a sort of left-handed wife of Captain Scarfield's. The population was almost entirely black and brown. One or two Jews and a half-dozen Yankee traders, of hardly dubious honesty, comprised the entire white population. The rest consisted of a mongrel accumulation of negroes, mulattoes and half-caste Spaniards, and of a multitude of black or yellow women and children. The settlement stood in a bight of the beach forming a small harbor and affording a fair anchorage for small vessels, excepting it were against the beating of a southeasterly gale. The houses, or cabins, were surrounded by clusters of coco palms and growths of bananas, and a long curve of white beach, sheltered from the large Atlantic breakers that burst and exploded upon an outer bar, was drawn like a necklace around the semicircle of emerald green water.

Such was the famous pirates' settlement of San Jose—a paradise of nature and a hell of human depravity and wickedness, and it was to this spot that Mainwaring paid another visit a few days after rescuing the crew of the *Baltimore Belle* from her shattered and sinking wreck.

As the little bay with its fringe of palms and its cluster of wattled huts opened up to view, Mainwaring discovered a vessel lying at anchor in the little harbor. It was a large and well-rigged schooner of two hundred and fifty or three hundred tons burden. As the *Yankee* rounded to under the stern of the stranger and dropped anchor in such a position as to bring her broadside battery to bear should the occasion require, Mainwaring set his glass to his eye to read the name he could distinguish beneath the overhang of her stern. It is impossible to describe his infinite surprise when, the white lettering starting out in the circle of the glass, he read, *Eliza Cooper of Philadelphia.*

He could not believe the evidence of his senses. Certainly this sink of iniquity was the last place in the world he would have expected to have fallen in with Eleazer Cooper.

He ordered out the gig, and had himself immediately rowed over to the schooner. Whatever lingering doubts he

might have entertained as to the identity of the vessel were quickly dispelled when he beheld Captain Cooper himself standing at the gangway to meet him. The impassive face of the Friend showed neither surprise nor confusion at what must have been to him a most unexpected encounter.

But when he stepped upon the deck of the *Eliza Cooper* and looked about him, Mainwaring could hardly believe the evidence of his senses at the transformation that he beheld. Upon the main deck were eight twelve-pound carronade neatly covered with tarpaulin; in the bow a Long Tom, also snugly stowed away and covered, directed a veiled and muzzled snout out over the bowsprit.

It was entirely impossible for Mainwaring to conceal his astonishment at so unexpected a sight, and whether or not his own thoughts lent color to his imagination, it seemed to him that Eleazer Cooper concealed under the immobility of his countenance no small degree of confusion.

After Captain Cooper had led the way into the cabin and he and the younger man were seated over a pipe of tobacco and the invariable bottle of fine old Jamaica rum. Mainwaring made no attempt to refrain from questioning him as to the reason for this singular and ominous transformation.

"I am a man of peace, James Mainwaring," Eleazer replied, "but there are men of blood in these waters, and an appearance of great strength is of use to protect the innocent from the wicked. If I remained in appearance the peaceful trader I really am, how long does thee suppose I could remain unassailed in this place?"

It occurred to Mainwaring that the powerful armament he had beheld was rather extreme to be used merely as a preventive. He smoked for a while in silence and then he suddenly asked the other point blank whether, if it came to blows with such a one as Captain Scarfield, would he make a fight of it?

The Quaker trading captain regarded him for a while in silence. His look, it seemed to Mainwaring, appeared to be dubitative as to how far he dared to be frank. "Friend James," he said at last, "I may as well acknowledge that my officers and crew are somewhat worldly. Of a truth

they do not hold the same testimony as I. I am inclined to think that if it came to the point of a broil with those men of iniquity, my individual voice cast for peace would not be sufficient to keep my crew from meeting violence with violence. As for myself, thee knows who I am and what is my testimony in these matters."

Mainwaring made no comment as to the extremely questionable manner in which the Quaker proposed to beat the devil about the stump. Presently he asked his second question:

"And might I inquire," he said, "what you are doing here and why you find it necessary to come at all into such a wicked, dangerous place as this?"

"Indeed, I knew thee would ask that question of me," said the Friend; "and I will be entirely frank with thee. These men of blood are, after all, but human beings, and as human beings they need food. I have at present upon this vessel upwards of two hundred and fifty barrels of flour which will bring a higher price here than anywhere else in the West Indies. To be entirely frank with thee, I will tell thee that I was engaged in making a bargain for the sale of the greater part of my merchandise when the news of thy approach drove away my best customer."

Mainwaring sat for a while in smoking silence. What the other had told him explained many things he had not before understood. It explained why Captain Cooper got almost as much for his flour and corn meal now that peace had been declared as he had obtained when the war and the blockade were in full swing. It explained why he had been so strong a defender of Captain Scarfield and the pirates that afternoon in the garden. Meantime, what was to be done? Eleazer confessed openly that he dealt with the pirates. What now was his—Mainwaring's—duty in the case? Was the cargo of the *Eliza Cooper* contraband and subject to confiscation? And then another question framed itself in his mind. Who was this customer whom his approach had driven away?

As though he had formulated the inquiry into speech, the other began directly to speak of it. "I know," he said, "that in a moment thee will ask me who was this customer

of whom I have just now spoken. I have no desire to conceal his name from thee. It was the man who is known as Captain Jack, or Captain John Scarfield."

Mainwaring fairly started from his seat. "The devil you say!" he cried. "And how long has it been," he asked, "since he left you?"

The Quaker skipper carefully refilled his pipe, which he had by now smoked out. "I would judge," he said, "that it is a matter of four or five hours since news was brought overland by means of swift runners of thy approach. Immediately the man of wickedness disappeared." Here Eleazer set the bowl of his pipe to the candle flame and began puffing out voluminous clouds of smoke. "I would have thee understand, James Mainwaring," he resumed, "that I am no friend of this wicked and sinful man. His safety is nothing to me. It is only a question of buying upon his part and of selling upon mine. If it is any satisfaction to thee I will heartily promise to bring thee news if I hear anything of the man of Belial. I may furthermore say that I think it is likely thee will have news more or less directly of him within the space of a day. If this should happen, however, thee will have to do thy own fighting without help from me, for I am no man of combat nor of blood, and will take no hand in it either way."

It struck Mainwaring that the words contained some meaning that did not appear upon the surface. This significance struck him as so ambiguous that when he went aboard the *Yankee* he confided as much of his suspicions as he saw fit to his second in command, Lieutenant Underwood. As night descended he had a double watch set, and had everything prepared to repel any attack or surprise that might be attempted.

III

Night time in the tropics descends with a surprising rapidity. At one moment the earth is shining with the brightness of the twilight; the next, as it were, all things are suddenly swallowed into a gulf of darkness. The particular night of which this story treats was not entirely clear; the time of year was about the approach of the rainy

season, and the tepid, tropical clouds added obscurity to the darkness of the sky, so that the night fell with even more startling quickness than usual. The blackness was very dense. Now and then a group of drifting stars swam out of a rift in the vapors, but the night was curiously silent and of a velvety darkness.

As the obscurity had deepened, Mainwaring had ordered lanthorns to be lit and slung to the shrouds and to the stays, and the faint yellow of their illumination lit the level white of the snug little war vessel, gleaming here and there in a starlike spark upon the brass trimmings and causing the rows of cannons to assume curiously gigantic proportions.

For some reason Mainwaring was possessed by a strange, uneasy feeling. He walked restlessly up and down the deck for a time, and then, still full of anxieties for he knew not what, went into his cabin to finish writing up his log for the day. He unstrapped his cutlass and laid it upon the table, lit his pipe at the lanthorn and was about preparing to lay aside his coat when word was brought to him that the captain of the trading schooner was come alongside and had some private information to communicate to him.

Mainwaring surmised in an instant that the trader's visit related somehow to news of Captain Scarfield, and as immediately in the relief of something positive to face, all of his feeling of restlessness vanished like a shadow of mist. He gave orders that Captain Cooper should be immediately shown into the cabin, and in a few moments the tall, angular form of the Quaker skipper appeared in the narrow, lanthorn-lighted space.

Mainwaring at once saw that his visitor was strangely agitated and disturbed. He had taken off his hat, and shining beads of perspiration had gathered and stood clustered upon his forehead. He did not reply to Mainwaring's greeting; he did not, indeed, seem to hear it; but he came directly forward to the table and stood leaning with one hand upon the open logbook in which the lieutenant had just been writing. Mainwaring had reseated himself at the head of the table, and the tall figure of the skipper stood looking down at him as from a considerable height.

"James Mainwaring," he said, "I promised thee to re-

port if I had news of the pirate. Is thee ready now to hear my news?"

There was something so strange in his agitation that it began to infect Mainwaring with a feeling somewhat akin to that which appeared to disturb his visitor. "I know not what you mean, sir!" he cried, "by asking if I care to hear your news. At this moment I would rather have news of that scoundrel than to have anything I know of in the world."

"Thou would? Thou would?" cried the other, with mounting agitation. "Is thee in such haste to meet him as all that? Very well; very well, then. Suppose I could bring thee face to face with him—what then? Hey? Hey? Face to face with him, James Mainwaring!"

The thought instantly flashed into Mainwaring's mind that the pirate had returned to the island; that perhaps at that moment he was somewhere near at hand.

"I do not understand you, sir," he cried. "Do you mean to tell me that you know where the villain is? If so, lose no time in informing me, for every instant of delay may mean his chance of again escaping."

"No danger of that!" the other declared vehemently. "No danger of that! I'll tell thee where he is, and I'll bring thee to him quick enough!" And as he spoke he thumped his fist against the open logbook. In the vehemence of his growing excitement his eyes appeared to shine green in the lanthorn light, and the sweat that had stood in beads upon his forehead was now running in streams down his face. One drop hung like a jewel to the tip of his beaklike nose. He came a step nearer to Mainwaring and bent forward toward him, and there was something so strange and ominous in his bearing that the lieutenant instinctively drew back a little where he sat.

"Captain Scarfield sent something to you," said Eleazer almost in a raucous voice, "something that you will be surprised to see." And the lapse in his speech from the Quaker "thee" to the plural "you" struck Mainwaring as singularly strange.

As he was speaking, Eleazer was fumbling in a pocket of his long-tailed drab coat, and presently he brought something forth that gleamed in the lanthorn light.

The next moment Mainwaring saw leveled directly in his face the round and hollow nozzle of a pistol.

There was an instant of dead silence, and then: "I am the man you seek!" said Eleazer Cooper, in a tense and breathless voice.

The whole thing had happened so instantaneously and unexpectedly that for the moment Mainwaring sat like one petrified. Had a thunderbolt fallen from the silent sky and burst at his feet he could not have been more stunned. He was like one held in the meshes of a horrid nightmare, and he gazed as through a mist of impossibility into the lineaments of the well-known, sober face now transformed as from within into the aspect of a devil. That face, now ashy white, was distorted into a diabolical grin. The teeth glistened in the lamplight. The brows, twisted into a tense and convulsed frown, were drawn down into black shadows, through which the eyes burned a baleful green like the eyes of a wild animal driven to bay. Again he spoke in the same breathless voice. "I am John Scarfield! Look at me, then, if you want to see a pirate!" Again there was a little time of silence, through which Mainwaring heard his watch ticking loudly from where it hung against the bulkhead. Then once more the other began speaking. "You would chase me out of the West Indies, would you? God damn you! What are you come to now? You are caught in your own trap, and you'll squeal loud enough before you get out of it. Speak a word or make a movement, and I'll blow your brains out against the partition behind you! Listen to what I say, or you are a dead man. Sing out an order instantly for my mate and my bo's'n to come here to the cabin, and be quick about it, for my finger's on the trigger, and it's only a pull to shut your mouth forever."

It was astonishing to Mainwaring, in afterward thinking about it all, how quickly his mind began to recover its steadiness after that first astonishing shock. Even as the other was speaking he discovered that his brain was becoming clarified to a wonderful lucidity; his thoughts were becoming rearranged, and with a marvelous activity and an alertness he had never before experienced. He knew that if he moved to escape or uttered any outcry he would be in-

stantly a dead man; for the circle of the pistol barrel was directed full against his forehead and with the steadiness of a rock. If he could but for an instant divert that fixed and deadly attention he might still have a chance for life. With the thought an inspiration burst into his mind, and he instantly put it into execution; thought, inspiration and action, as in a flash, were one. He must make the other turn aside his deadly gaze, and instantly he roared out in a voice that stunned his own ears, "Strike, bo's'n! Strike, quick!"

Taken by surprise, and thinking, doubtless, that another enemy stood behind him, the pirate swung around like a flash with his pistol leveled against the blank boarding. Equally upon the instant he saw the trick that had been played upon him, and in a second flash had turned again. The turn and return had occupied but a moment of time, but that moment, thanks to the readiness of his own invention, had undoubtedly saved Mainwaring's life. As the other turned away his gaze for that brief instant, Mainwaring leaped forward and upon him. There was a flashing flame of fire as the pistol was discharged, and a deafening detonation that seemed to split his brain. For a moment, with reeling senses, he supposed himself to have been shot, the next he knew he had escaped. With the energy of despair he swung his enemy around and drove him with prodigious violence against the corner of the table. The pirate emitted a grunting cry, and then they fell together, Mainwaring upon the top, and the pistol clattered with them to the floor in their fall. Even as he fell, Mainwaring roared in a voice of thunder, "All hands repel boarders!" And then again, "All hands repel boarders!"

Whether hurt by the table edge or not, the fallen pirate struggled as though possessed of forty devils, and in a moment or two Mainwaring saw the shine of a long, keen knife that he had drawn from somewhere about his person. The lieutenant caught him by the wrist, but the other's muscles were as though made of steel. They both fought in despairing silence, the one to carry out his frustrated purpose to kill, the other to save his life. Again and again Mainwaring felt that the knife had been thrust against him,

piercing once his arm, once his shoulder and then his neck. He felt the warm blood streaming down his arm and body, and looked about him in despair. The pistol lay near upon the deck of the cabin. Still holding the other by the wrist as he could, Mainwaring snatched up the empty weapon and struck once and again at the bald, narrow forehead beneath him. A third blow he delivered with all the force he could command, and then with a violent and convulsive throe the straining muscles beneath him relaxed and grew limp, and the fight was won.

Through all the struggle he had been aware of the shouts of voices, of trampling of feet and discharge of fire-arms, and the thought came to him, even through his own danger, that the *Yankee* was being assaulted by the pirates. As he felt the struggling form beneath him loosen and dissolve into quietude, he leaped up, and snatching his cutlass, which still lay upon the table, rushed out upon the deck, leaving the stricken form lying twitching upon the floor behind him.

It was a fortunate thing that he had set double watches and had prepared himself for some attack from the pirates, otherwise the *Yankee* would certainly have been lost. As it was, the surprise was so overwhelming that the pirates, who had been concealed in the large whaleboat that had come alongside, were not only able to gain a foothold upon the deck, but for a time it seemed as though they would drive the crew of the brig below the hatches.

But as Mainwaring, streaming with blood, rushed out upon the deck, the pirates became immediately aware that their own captain must have been overpowered, and in an instant their desperate energy began to evaporate. One or two jumped overboard; one, who seemed to be the mate, fell dead from a pistol shot, and then, in the turn of a hand, there was a rush of a retreat and a vision of leaping forms in the dusky light of the lanthorns, and a sound of splashing in the water below.

The crew of the *Yankee* continued firing at the phosphorescent wakes of the swimming bodies, but whether with effect it was impossible at the time to tell.

IV

The pirate captain did not die immediately. He lingered for three or four days, now and then unconscious, now and then semiconscious, but always deliriously wandering. All the while he thus lay dying, the mulatto woman, with whom he lived in this part of his extraordinary dual existence, nursed and cared for him with such rude attentions as the surroundings afforded. In the wanderings of his mind the same duality of life followed him. Now and then he would appear the calm, sober, self-contained, well-ordered member of a peaceful society that his friends in his far-away home knew him to be; at other times the nether part of his nature would leap up into life like a wild beast, furious and gnashing. At the one time he talked evenly and clearly of peaceful things; at the other time he blasphemed and hooted with fury.

Several times Mainwaring, though racked by his own wounds, sat beside the dying man through the silent watches of the tropical nights. Oftentimes upon these occasions as he looked at the thin, lean face babbling and talking so aimlessly, he wondered what it all meant. Could it have been madness—madness in which the separate entities of good and bad each had, in its turn, a perfect and distinct existence? He chose to think that this was the case. Who, within his inner consciousness, does not feel that same ferine, savage man struggling against the stern, adamantine bonds of morality and decorum? Were those bonds burst asunder, as they were with this man, might not the wild beast rush forth, as it had rushed forth in him, to rend and to tear? Such were the questions that Mainwaring asked himself. And how had it all come about? By what easy gradations had the respectable Quaker skipper descended from the decorum of his home life, step by step, into such a gulf of iniquity? Many such thoughts passed through Mainwaring's mind, and he pondered them through the still reaches of the tropical nights while he sat watching the pirate captain struggle out of the world he had so long burdened. At last the poor wretch died, and the earth was well quit of one of its torments.

A systematic search was made through the island for the scattered crew, but none was captured. Either there were some secret hiding-places upon the island (which was not very likely) or else they had escaped in boats hidden somewhere among the tropical foliage. At any rate, they were gone.

Nor, search as he would, could Mainwaring find a trace of any of the pirate treasure. After the pirate's death and under close questioning, the weeping mulatto woman so far broke down as to confess in broken English that Captain Scarfield had taken a quantity of silver money aboard his vessel, but either she was mistaken or else the pirates had taken it thence again and had hidden it somewhere else.

Nor would the treasure ever have been found but for a most fortuitous accident.

Mainwaring had given orders that the *Eliza Cooper* was to be burned, and a party was detailed to carry the order into execution. At this the cook of the *Yankee* came petitioning for some of the Wilmington and Brandywine flour to make some plum duff upon the morrow, and Mainwaring granted his request in so far that he ordered one of the men to knock open one of the barrels of flour and to supply the cook's demands.

The crew detailed to execute this modest order in connection with the destruction of the pirate vessel had not been gone a quarter of an hour when word came back that the hidden treasure had been found.

Mainwaring hurried aboard the *Eliza Cooper,* and there in the midst of the open flour barrel he beheld a great quantity of silver coin buried in and partly covered by the white meal. A systematic search was now made. One by one the flour barrels were heaved up from below and burst open on the deck and their contents searched, and if nothing but the meal was found it was swept overboard. The breeze was whitened with clouds of flour, and the white meal covered the surface of the ocean for yards around.

In all, upwards of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars were found concealed beneath the innocent flour and meal. It was no wonder the pirate captain was so successful, when he could upon an instant's notice transform

himself from a wolf of the ocean to a peaceful Quaker trader selling flour to the hungry towns and settlements among the scattered islands of the West Indies, and so carrying his bloody treasure safely into his quiet, northern home.

In concluding this part of the narrative it may be added that a wide stripe of canvas painted black was discovered in the hold of the *Eliza Cooper.* Upon it, in great white letters, was painted the name, *Bloodhound.* Undoubtedly this was used upon occasions to cover the real and peaceful title of the trading schooner, just as its captain had, in reverse, covered his sanguine and cruel life by a thin sheet of morality and respectability.

This is the true story of the death of Captain Jack Scarfield.

The Newburyport chapbook, of which I have already spoken, speaks only of how the pirate disguised himself upon the ocean as a Quaker trader.

Nor is it likely that any one ever identified Eleazer Cooper with the pirate, for only Mainwaring, of all the crew of the *Yankee,* was exactly aware of the true identity of Captain Scarfield. All that was ever known to the world was that Eleazer Cooper had been killed in a fight with the pirates.

In a little less than a year Mainwaring was married to Lucinda Fairbanks. As to Eleazer Cooper's fortune, which eventually came into the possession of Mainwaring through his wife, it was many times a subject of speculation to the lieutenant how it had been earned. There were times when he felt well assured that a part of it at least was the fruit of piracy, but it was entirely impossible to guess how much more was the result of legitimate trading.

For a little time it seemed to Mainwaring that he should give it all up, but this was at once so impracticable and so quixotic that he presently abandoned it, and in time his qualms and misdoubts faded away and he settled himself down to enjoy that which had come to him through his marriage.

In time the Mainwarings removed to New York, and ultimately the fortune that the pirate Scarfield had left

behind him was used in part to found the great shipping-house of Mainwaring & Bigot, whose famous transatlantic packet-ships were in their time the admiration of the whole world.

THE WILD WESTERN WAY*

By Octave Thanet

The Laurens mansion stands far back of the wide and elm-shaded New England street, and the carefully kept—or carefully wild—acres about it make a park in the village. Opposite is the little, white inn buzzing with gay life all summer; white and still as the snow on the hills, all winter. The people at the inn are vastly interested in the mansion. When they pass the great yellow pile, with its dazzling hedge of geraniums and clematis hiding the stone foundations, and its lofty white Corinthian portico, they seldom fail to throw a lingering glance; and often, were one at their elbows, one might catch an echo of the gossip, recurring as regularly as flies with the warm weather.

"And one poor, afflicted woman owns all this beautiful place?"

"Yes, and ever so much more. She's rich, rich!"

"But she can't marry; isn't that in her father's will?"

"Not until she is forty-one. You see her mother was mortally afraid of adventurers marrying her for her money; her father wasn't so afraid and, somehow, they compromised on that age; I suppose they thought if she could be kept from such people until then she would be safe."

"Poor thing! Does she never go out? She's deformed, isn't she?"

"No, not exactly; she's a kind of a dwarf, can't walk at all; but I have seen her driving about, and she looks like anybody else in a carriage—she's pretty, too!"

"Is her mind all right?"

"Oh, perfectly, and she's a fine musician on the violin. When her parents were alive they used to have all sorts of musicians come up and give concerts—just for her to hear."

*Published in The Northwestern Miller 1900.

"Did she ever want to marry?"

"I think she did, once; there was a kind of a story, but there are always stories."

This is the story. It happened only last year. One afternoon in late August, Miss Laurens' kindred, all her living kindred in the world, be it said, except one cousin in Nebraska, were to be seen sitting on the piazza in comfortable rocking-chairs which they did not rock. There were the two Laurens cousins, John's daughters—Grace, who had married the bishop, and Isabel, who had not married at thirty but was a pillar of the clubs; there was Honor (Captain Ridgely's widow), and there was the other Laurens cousin, Hester, who had won the golf cup and was of renown as a whip; she was only twenty, but she could drive a four-in-hand. The four women had just met. Honor Ridgely had been in the house on a visit; but the others had come to the village from Berkshire and the sea, assembling, for reason of weight, not at the mansion but at the inn. The bishop, who had come with his wife, was still at the inn. It was in response to letters from Mrs. Ridgely that they had come. All their faces wore an indefinable expression of controlled agitation. Isabel spoke first, folding her arms and shuddering. "It is simply horrible, unbelievable!" she breathed.

"She must have been hypnotized," Grace murmured. She was short and of a fair plumpness, and her voice was soft.

"She's crazy!" said Hester.

"No," said Honor, the eldest, "she is only in love; in love for the first time!" Honor was not rich, like the other cousins; she was only "nice looking," instead of pretty like Hester or "sweet" like Grace or distinguished like Isabel; yet no one in the family was more considered than she; a position that she probably owed to a combination of kindliness and sense. "Poor Gwen!" she added.

"She used to be so fond of you, Honor," said Grace, "you've been with her ever since her mother died; can't you do anything?"

"Do you suppose I haven't tried—before I wrote you all? I couldn't believe my own eyes! It began when I was

away with my aunt; she was so ill, you know, and Gwen made me go—it was only a week; but when I came back she was taking singing lessons of this man and telling how he had sung in grand opera, but his health failed. I could see she was fascinated by him; but he was careful, and so was she. I must be stupid, for it was not until a couple of weeks ago that I realized. After that he threw off the mask. He orders the servants and gives himself all the airs of the master already—and she *likes* it! Why, one of the grooms ventured to refuse to give him a horse one day and Gwen discharged the poor fellow; she would not listen to me. And she has a new French maid recommended by him; and poor, decent Aunt Mehitable, who has taken care of her and ruled her and loved her in her grim, New England fashion, has been so snubbed that she has gone off heart-broken as well as angry, to make a visit. 'I never did such a thing in my life,' she told me, 'me visiting, as if she could git along without me! I've a mind to say I won't go!' I persuaded her, however; for I feared that he or Gwen would say something that would cut the faithful, old, peevish soul to the quick, if she did stay. As for Danbury, they've a plan to pension him off, too; and he had the cook sent away outright—"

"And what were you doing?" cried Isabel, "when this upstart went on so?"

"I made a final appeal, and I wrote to you all to come suddenly without notice. I wrote to Dorothy Wrenn, too—"

"Who's she?" said Hester.

"She's Gwendolen's and my cousin on her mother's side. Gwen has never seen her, she lives out in Nebraska; she's had a struggle; her husband died, he was a miller—flour mill; and she took the mill and ran it. Gwen lent her money; it seems his affairs were in just the shape where, if he had lived and been able to get money, he stood to make something, but he died and they were likely to lose it all, when Gwen came to the rescue—"

"I pity her if Gwen marries Maurice Buckingham," said Isabel; "he won't be a nice creditor."

"She has paid it all back, I think. But Gwen took a lot of interest in her and her children, and used to send them

things; and the Nebraska woman sent her some hams that she pickled herself, and sacks of every kind of flour she makes—you needn't laugh, they're amazing good; and all the children's pictures by the country photographer. Oh, they are great chums. I wrote her, and she's coming; I am expecting her by the six fifty-eight; Parker's going for her. I don't suppose she or any one can move Gwen, but it's our last chance. She is forty-one tomorrow, and I believe she means to marry him then; for I overheard him say to her, 'Oh, never mind! after tomorrow they will be quiet enough!' And when I told Gwen you were all coming to the inn, because you wanted to see her and speak to her, she said, 'I won't pretend to be ignorant of why you have arranged this surprise party for me, Honor; I will see you and listen to you. I only ask that you will not go to the inn. I may not have my kindred under my roof again for a long time; let me have them now, whatever you wish to say.' And Danbury told me, today, just now, that Buckingham had ordered the surrey and Parker for tomorrow morning at—half past five. He wouldn't order the surrey, just for himself; she is going with him!"

"Why?" asked Isabel, "*not*—that would be too disgraceful. You can't mean—"

"I mean that they will be married, tomorrow morning, before breakfast; then, he can defy us. Oh, he will not wait!"

"We must stop her," cried Isabel.

"How?" said Honor. "She is forty-one, tomorrow."

"Can't we send her to a lunatic asylum or a sanitarium?" ventured Hester, "an awfully nice one with private baths and her own horses?"

Honor sighed, but a little spot kindled on her placid cheek, only to fade at a look at Grace's gentle, worried face.

"Arthur doesn't think we ought to try violent measures," said Arthur's wife. Arthur was the bishop. "He says Buckingham is so shrewd he would get out a writ of habeas corpus and make an awful scandal. Arthur saw him, himself, this morning. He was outwardly polite, but he had a nasty, little, sneering way about him and called her Gwendolen—doesn't that stamp him! Arthur told him the mar-

riage would alienate the whole family; and he only shrugged his shoulders, and said he hoped to make her so happy she would bear it. Arthur asked him his prospects; he said he had himself and his talent to offer, and he hinted in the nastiest way that the circumstances were so exceptional—those were his very words—that so much should not be required; don't you call that atrocious?"

"He is a sickening, cruel cad," cried Isabel, "and he thinks he has the game in his own hands and can defy us!"

"Nobody knows anything about his blooming past, I suppose," murmured Hester, dreamily, to her polished shoes.

"Hester," said Grace with dignity, "that is not a remark for a young girl to make."

"Bless you, I haven't been brought up in a dove-cote, like poor Cousin Gwen," returned Hester serenely; "I'll engage the young cavalier has a lively past. Can't we hire a private detective and find a wife or two in the background—"

"Before tomorrow morning?" said Isabel with irony.

"And you won't let me kidnap Cousin Gwen for her own good?"

"And be arrested by Buckingham and have the scandal out in all the yellow journals, with an awful picture on the front page? You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

"I know he is a loathsome cad," said Hester, "if only—I don't suppose you'd let me be friendly with him and take him out with the four-in-hand and josh him into driving—"

"Certainly not," said Isabel, "I am your guardian and I don't propose to have you killed, even if it were not out of the question to have you recognize that person in any way."

"I don't believe he would drive," mused Hester, not regarding her, "I am afraid he is a little yellow—"

"Hester, I wish you wouldn't be so slangy—"

"Was I? I didn't mean to be; I only meant that the gentleman is a sissy man. I saw him, this morning, with Parker and the colt; and they met an auto bubbling along, and my gentleman hopped out, he did, and let poor Parker wrestle with Gyp until I got to her head. Little coward! I wish Cousin Gwen could have seen him!"

"If only—but there is so little time," moaned Isabel,

"are we to see Gwen after dinner, all of us? Who is that coming in?"

"It's the western cousin," cried Hester, "coming before Parker went for her—earlier train—just like a westerner; always there before expected—because they go so fast! Does she look helpful, Cousin Honor? Stalwart and determined?"

"Well, hardly," said Isabel; and the bishop's wife sighed deeply.

Indeed, it would be hard to picture anything milder and less resolute than the tall, thin, weary, shy-looking woman who sat on the seat of the express wagon beside the grinning driver, clasping a forlorn little yellow dog in her arms. The dog's rough coat was painted dismally with his own gore and some fresh mud. The woman herself was dressed neatly (except from the gifts of mud from the dog) in a black-and-white shirtwaist and a black skirt. She wore a widow's bonnet without a veil, and her unshaded features were tanned. Her hair was streaked with gray. Her eyes were gray and mild. She was rather a comely woman in an unremarkable way. She blushed as the figures on the piazza rose, and transferred the unfortunate dog to the seat and the loose clasp of the driver's left arm. At the same time she slipped some silver into his hand, saying: "You'll be sure to look after doggie? Don't forget the Pond's Extract. I'll come and see him, tomorrow, I guess. Please hand me the linen shawl-strap and the big brown bag and the telescope case and the umbrella. Thank you very much. It is a shame to bring so much baggage, but I haven't any trunk."

Honor was already at the side of the wagon, under the porte-cochère; but her welcome was taken off her lips by another voice, while the gray-haired butler ran to receive the luggage. "This is Cousin Dorothy, isn't it?" said the voice.

The flush deepened on the newcomer's face. The others turned—their own words of courtesy hushed by a new constraint; they looked with unconscious coldness at the delicate, white-robed figure in the wheeled chair. Gwendolen Laurens had a face which had been more than pretty in a

faintly-colored way, but for its habitual expression of sullen suffering; it was almost beautiful now, transfigured by a glow of pleasure.

"I am so glad you came!" she cried.

The western woman's eyes filled with tears as she took Gwendolen's slim-ringed hands in her cotton gloves, and kissed her.

"I didn't know—I was afraid, coming uninvited—this way," she murmured.

"Coming any way you are welcome," said Miss Laurens in a full, round voice, quite unlike her usual languid tones, "but what about the doggie?"—which at this moment was whining and straining to get free, "is it yours?"

"Oh, no, ma'am," said Mrs. Wrenn, "just a little stranger doggie I found under the platform of the depot, where it was hiding, most et up by some dogs; and this gentleman and I"—indicating the expressman—"coaxed it out. There was a man on the platform, a real well-dressed, handsome young man who only looked on and laughed, wouldn't raise his hand to help me. But I got him out, and then this gentleman came and put him in his wagon. Some of the folks seemed to think he was mad, but he wasn't—only scared 'most to death. Look at him wag his tail!"

"The poor little thing,"—Miss Laurens was fond of animals—"Danbury, take him to the stables; we'll look after him."

"I'll see he is cared for," interposed Hester. Then the others came with their greeting, which Miss Laurens viewed with a grim little smile. At the first pause, she proposed to show Mrs. Wrenn to her room; and so carried her off, wheeling her chair in advance.

The cousins exchanged glances as the little procession disappeared.

"For or against?" murmured Isabel; and Honor shook her head.

"After all it doesn't matter," said Hester, "she's no tower. She won't help a kidnaping bee!"

The next hour was a weary one; not the less weary that Maurice Buckingham appeared during dinner. He was a little late, but took his chair unconcernedly and complained

of the soup. Mrs. Wrenn looked at him with mild seriousness. He was a handsome young man, slender and graceful, with an admirable complexion, fair as a woman's, and prominent, brilliant dark eyes. He spoke with a marked English accent and a faint lisp.

"Didn't I see you at the depot?" said Mrs. Wrenn.

"Did you?" said he indifferently.

"When I was trying to get the dog out from under the platform," Mrs. Wrenn pursued, in her soft, monotonous western burr.

Buckingham shot an oblique glance at Miss Laurens, and shrugged his shoulders—immaculate white duck shoulders; and his eyes went down the pink stripes of his shirt bosom. "Ah, I remember," he said, "I thought your face was familiar; I was just coming to your assistance when another knight whose clothes were rather better suited to muddy dogs, ran in—I wish I had, now!"

"I am going to take the dog," said Miss Laurens.

"You won't want it, Gwen," said he, quickly, "it's a beastly little cur."

"I wouldn't call him quite a cur," said Mrs. Wrenn, mildly, "he's a little yellow colored, but he's very intelligent."

"I shall take him," said Miss Laurens. She had colored at the sound of her Christian name. She saw the glance that went from Honor to Grace, and from Grace to Hester and Isabel.

Buckingham bowed politely. "Oh, certainly," said he, "if you wish."

Again Miss Laurens winced; the Nebraska woman was looking at Buckingham with a melancholy, unabashed interest. "Did you say *you* would take him?" she asked, very seriously.

"I did not," sneered Buckingham; "I merely withdrew my objections."

There was a little silence; the four cousins at the end of the table talked about Berkshire among themselves; by tacit consent no one of them had addressed any remark to Buckingham, who had been equally silent to them. Miss Laurens turned the talk into the safe channel of the weather

in Nebraska, and Isabel inquired about the Nebraska clubs. "I hope your club is federated," said the club evangelist.

Mrs. Wrenn blushed. "I—I—don't belong to any club," she murmured, looking unhappy. "I have been so busy with the mill and the children; but I hope to have more time next year. We have a very fine club in Willow Creek; it's federated, Miss Laurens."

"Think of it," said Gwendolen, "Cousin Dorothy runs a mill. It was her husband's, and he lost his sight; so she fell into the way of going with him, and learned the business; and since his death she has taken charge of it; and taken charge of a family of five little children besides."

"Oh, that was at first," said Mrs. Wrenn, "they are big now, and help."

She did not seem desirous of enlarging either on her business or her family, and asked Buckingham some question about music. They could not hear the conversation, as Gwendolen engaged Grace on the subject of her own children at the same time. They talked with the hostess of this singular dinner party, and the Nebraska cousin talked with Buckingham. He spoke fluently, with an intense interest in his theme. The Nebraska woman listened, and occasionally inclined her head or ventured a question. One by one the others dropped out of their own conversation to hear without appearing to listen.

"So, then," said Buckingham, "I gave it up; there is no use quarreling with such people; they are too low and envious—altogether beneath a gentleman's contempt; I told him if he didn't think me important enough for my name to come first, he'd better find some one else. But I understood. It was all envy; I got too much applause and too many flowers; you know how the girls are, dear little things —I never minded, never answered their notes, but some fellows are different; and our tenor was sickening he was so vain; and so jealous of me. 'See here, Jack,' I said, 'I'm not to blame; I don't ask them to send me flowers.' But he was raging; and the manager was a vulgar ass who listened to him; and I simply chucked the whole thing. They were sorry enough afterwards, but it was too late. Oh, the only way is for a singer to have his own theatre;

then he can have things harmonious and handsome, and get the talent that can properly support him. My dream is to have a theatre of my own!"

Thus he declaimed, enlarging on his former triumphs, while Mrs. Wrenn listened with impassive attention; her eyes occasionally wandering over the old mahogany sideboard and its gleaming splendor of plate, the embroidered linen and the jeweled pomp of glass and china in the quaint old cupboards. She asked a few low questions that seemed only to stimulate Buckingham's flow of speech. He began rehearsing his experience of the folly of the matinee girls. Miss Laurens listened with a perplexed look. It was as if she insensibly felt the influence of the unresponsive faces about her; she was seeing her lover from her kindred's point of view.

To Honor it was all ghastly; the brutal vanity of the man cracking every now and then through a sickly veneer of refinement. She wondered could not Gwendolen herself perceive it and be undeceived. But Gwendolen's studied politeness of manner gave no hint of her feelings. Did she suffer, thinking this would be the last time that she should welcome her own blood to her roof? Did she blindly accept his portrait of himself as an irresistibly attractive charmer? Was she proud of him in the insensate weakness of women as to the men they love? None of the cousins could tell.

When the dreary dinner ended, Honor stepped to her chair. "The bishop is here, waiting, Gwendolen, dear," she began; but Buckingham was at her side. He made her a profound and mocking bow. "Pardon," said he, "but Miss Laurens has a previous and important engagement with me; she will see you later." Not waiting her reply, he wheeled the chair out of the room; while Danbury glared after him and Honor hesitated, distracted from her more vigorous purpose by her instinct of delicacy and her perception that opposition would only jeopard her cause. She found the bishop striding about the room in wrath. He had had but a meager dinner at the inn; and he felt deeply Gwendolen's turpitude in exposing her people to such discomforts.

"I will see whether she will turn us off in this way," said he sternly; and walked out of the library.

Hester, alone, seemed undismayed; she turned cheerfully to Mrs. Wrenn, saying: "Did Cousin Gwen talk to you about Buckingham? Did she drivel over him?"

"I can't imagine her—that over anything," said Mrs. Wrenn. "No, ma'am, she was so sweet she made me cry. She remembered—and think of it, in her trouble—she remembered the names of every one of the children! She asked after them. She was so sweet; and she's so unhappy I couldn't help crying. I felt so ashamed. Did any of you ladies notice that my eyes were red?"

"She is impossible!" moaned Isabel aside to Honor. "Not at all," she added aloud.

"She was so pathetic; and she is such a noble character. She said she'd never really lived; that her mother was so disappointed in her she never loved her; her father was good to her and Cousin Honor was just like a sister; and she felt grateful; all her relations, she said, were kind to her. 'But they pity me,' she said, 'they love as they would love any helpless thing; and I want to be admired, adored—am I not preposterous?' It wrung my heart to see her; I said of course we all wanted to feel that we were doing something better than other folks, and that somebody knew it; that's one main reason women got married; and I told her right there how pretty she was, and how bright and quick-witted, and how I'd valued her letters. At first I feared she was offended, for she smiled such a bitter kind of smile. 'That's the way Maurice talks; but nobody else—' "

"And I was so sure she was offended if one spoke of her looks," cried Honor sadly, "I was a fool. The poor, hungry, cynical heart!"

"I hoped," said Mrs. Wrenn, "that her beau would prove to be a good man; that he was really in love with her, and that he had some sense. I was prepared to stand right by him if he was—the bishop has come back. I guess he didn't find them."

The bishop had not found them, to judge from his mien, which was that of a volcano on the eve of eruption. He advanced with a solemn hand uplifted.

"I had a message brought by Danbury; they were locked up in a room. The unhappy woman is lost!"

"Not married!" shrieked Isabel.

"Of course not, Isabel; she would lose her property if she were. I mean she defies us. She sends word that she is so exhausted that she must beg us to excuse her for the evening; she will see us tomorrow directly after breakfast."

"Did you tell her"—Grace, his wife began, but did not finish the sentence, as the bishop with some irritation interrupted: "The door was locked; I couldn't very well give her my opinion of her conduct through the keyhole!"

"She means to be married tomorrow before breakfast, I am sure," said Honor.

"I don't know how we can prevent it," said the bishop. "I shall draw up a letter—imploring her to defer her wedding for one year, at least for six months, and promising on our part if she will agree and we discover nothing unfitting a gentleman and a man of honor in Mr. Buckingham's past, to withdraw our objection. If he is a decent man and loves her he will agree to our conditions; if not, and if she will not show decent respect to her parents' memory and wishes by granting that much—"

"He won't and she won't," said Honor.

"It is all we can do," said the bishop. "Will you sign the letter? You also, Mrs. Wrenn?" "Yes, sir," said Mrs. Wrenn, "but"—her color rose nervously—"if—if you don't succeed, I ought to say now, that I can't feel it right to abandon Cousin Gwendolen Laurens. She helped me when I was in sore straits; and whatever she does I can't go back on her. I know you feel differently—"

"I shall never speak to her again if she disgraces us all by marrying that creature," said Isabel.

"Unless I miss my guess, he won't let her speak to us," said Hester, drily.

"At least we would best go away, now," said the bishop, "all of us." He went to the desk and bent over the letter; and it was to be observed that he wrote with rather a heavy as well as a firm hand. As if instinctively, the others drew apart from the stranger cousin who would not abandon Gwendolen. They distrusted her vaguely; even Honor, who was tolerant and just. Hester, however, threw her a smile

and a nod to which a wintry gleam on Mrs. Wrenn's grave features was a kind of response. By and by she strolled quietly into the salon and Hester followed her, but soon reappeared. When the bishop announced the letter finished, the Nebraska cousin gave over studying the Sheraton chairs and water colors and signed first. They all signed after her, Honor saying sadly, "It's eloquent and moderate, and it ought to move her; but you will see, I shan't be able to get it to her."

Her prediction was justified; she went with the letter to Miss Laurens' room, but could get no further than the smiling French maid and the door. So, rather than leave the appeal with an uncertain messenger, she carried it to Danbury, who promised to try to deliver it, but shook his gray head. "Things are changed here, Mrs. Ridgely," he sighed, "I have to put up with strange doings." Honor's heart was too weak to comfort him. She returned to the indignant bishop, who marshaled his womankind and fared forth. Mrs. Wrenn did not accompany the band; she faltered in excuse her wish to see Miss Laurens once more. Isabel said coldly that she must decide for herself; the others said "Good evening." Even Hester made no comment; she was unwontedly serious. She went off to her chamber as soon as the inn was reached. "I'm tired and I'm cross," said she.

On her part, Honor passed a dismal night, wearily making plans and discarding them. Her wits could not get beyond a last charge in the morning. Therefore by daybreak she stole over to the Laurens mansion, standing blank and silent in the faint, cool light. The dew painted the lawn; the purple and green shadows of trees lay on the grass. There was no sign of life in the curtained windows; but when Honor came into the stable court the surrey was ready, the French maid beside Parker in front, and Danbury settling Miss Laurens into her seat. Roger, the coachman, looked on frowning. Buckingham, with a carnation in his buttonhole, stood at Danbury's elbow. His color turned at sight of Honor. He swung himself lightly into the seat. Honor caught at Miss Laurens' gown. "I don't want to interrupt your drive, Gwendolen," she said, struggling not to seem breathless, although she was spent with

her rush to the carriage, "but I must speak to you a moment; will you let Danbury take you back to the house, or shall I speak to you here?"

Gwendolen Laurens turned pale; she directed a glance of entreaty, almost pitiful in its humility, toward Buckingham.

"Why not?" said he with a shrug, "as well now as any time. If you will walk to the house we will come there; and Parker can get out."

Honor assented. She walked to the house; but, then, she was despising herself for a credulous idiot, for the surrey and horses went by her like the wind; and Buckingham, as he lifted his hat, sent her an exultant and derisive smile.

It was an hour later; she was still waiting the blow that she felt would fall. She knew that Danbury had given the letter, and she knew that Gwendolen had read it.

"I heard him laughing 'bout it," said Danbury, " 'tain't no use, Mrs. Ridgely; she believes every word he says. She's been crying all night; she ain't happy, but he makes her think black is white. I know one thing, I won't stay in the house after he's master, nor none of the others, either. He ain't no gentleman."

Honor had carried her anxiety out on the lawn. Miserably she was going over the last months, recalling the progress of this infatuation that had conquered her cousin. "Give us only a month and we might do something," she thought. "He is wise to hurry; for I can see she begins to waver!"

Suddenly a thud of horses' hoofs made her look up. She beheld, not the grays and the surrey which she expected, but a wet bay horse, the whirling red wheels of the runabout, a bent, brown whipcord back, a brown hat at an unseemly angle and a strained and pallid profile racing past her. The vision disappeared into the stable court, where it dissolved into another vision of Parker wildly gesticulating beside the runabout and a dripping steed. Thus Honor found him in full current of agitated narrative, while two staring grooms made a pretense of rubbing down and unharnessing the horse, and Roger, the coachman, lent a disapproving attention.

"What's the matter, Parker?" said Honor, "where's the surrey? And Miss Laurens?"

"God knows, ma'am,"—Parker spoke in gulps, clasping and unclasping his hands in his excitement; meanwhile the grooms stopped unharnessing the steaming horse—"I wish I knew, ma'am. I couldn't help it; they were two to one and desperate! If that rotten little music man had had a grain of pluck he'd a' helped me; but I couldn't do nothing, jes' myself; and a pistol at my head, too; Miss Laurens said herself, says she, 'Parker, get home, quick's you can!' says she. What could I do?"

"Parker, what on earth has happened? Can't you tell a straight story? How did you get the runabout?"

Parker smiled a sickly smile; "I was kinder trying to break it to you. We was stopped," he said, "off in the woods, on a steep hill. We came on two men in the runabout, our runabout! There they was, spang across the road, so we couldn't pass. I says to Madermaselle, 'How like that looks to the bay trotter!' I says, and the words wasn't out o' my mouth before one of 'em jumps at my hosses' heads and pulls a pistol on us and hollers for us to hold up our hands! The other got his pistol out, too. Both of 'em had on black masks and the wickedest looking eyes I ever seen! 'I got to hold the hosses,' says I; 'and I'm going to hold the hosses!' 'If you ain't out by three,' says the man, 'I'll blow your head off. One!' 'Get out, Parker,' says Miss Laurens—she was the coolest hand you ever seen, didn't turn a hair—'get out, you wouldn't be much use to hold hosses with your head blown off,' says she, so I got out for her; and I told 'em so; I'd never stirred a step for all their guns. But they got me out, and one man held his pistol on me while the other man made Buckingham get out. Lord! but he was a scared cat; he stood by and let 'em take Miss Laurens' purse—Madermaselle give it up to save her own—and they took the rings off Miss Laurens' fingers—if I had ben nigh her I'd have kicked them; but he didn't—he jes' trembled and mos' cried, and his hands was a-wobbling to beat the world. 'Now,' says the man, 'you and the gal cut and run; we'll take care of the lady,' says he. And I give you my word that feller run off like a deer. Didn't

look round once. Left Madermaselle 'way behind; I don't know whether she caught up or not, for the two men hopped into the surrey; and they turned round like a flash of lightning before I was suspecting sech a thing; and they went off like mad. I chased them in the runabout, but you know where the road forks, I lost 'em there; and I didn't know nothing better than to come home to see 'bout getting the police."

"Much you chased 'em!" sneered old Roger, "you in the runabout and them in the surrey, and you didn't catch them!"

The one thought in Honor's mind was whether the highwaymen had prevented the marriage; if they had—to summon the police would be but a sorry return for a great service; besides, there was the publicity to consider; yet, first of all, where was Gwendolen? Naturally, her first impulse was to fall upon the unlucky Parker.

"They robbed Miss Laurens," said she sternly, "and kidnaped her; and you two men let them!"

"They was two to one," pleaded Parker, sullenly, "he wasn't no 'count at all, he was so rattled; and she told me to git out. She wasn't a bit scared, not a bit; she was kinder pale, but she was smiling when he run off. And the man wasn't rough with her. He says, 'Don't be afraid; I won't harm you, madam!' 'I'm not in the least afraid,' says she; and she wasn't, neither."

Roger snorted. "Of course she wasn't afraid; what I want to know is, was you so mortal terrified you didn't look out on the road for Miss Hester and that Nebraska lady? They went out in the runabout, and the robber must 'a' taken it from them. It's awful queer, to my mind."

"Will I go for the p'lice, ma'am?" one of the grooms felt moved to say, here.

"No, you will not," returned Honor, sharply.

"Say, Mrs. Ridgely," cried the groom, forgetting his manners in a wave of excitement, "look! ain't that them? It's the surrey."

"It is them—all of them!" explained old Roger; and he cast a suspicious glance at Parker, who stood gasping.

There was no doubt; it was the surrey which swung

through the gateway and bore down on them; and in the surrey sat Miss Laurens and Mrs. Wrenn and Hester Laurens. Mrs. Wrenn was in her travelling garb, neat and unremarkable and mild, as usual; Hester's crisp muslin gown and dainty hat had not suffered; she was pretty and smiling, and drove into the stable court with her usual spirited finish. Miss Laurens looked still and tired; but she sat erect on her seat.

Hester threw the reins to Parker, saying: "Ah, Parker, got here first, did you? Have you sent for the police and the fire department and the humane society?"

"We have sent for no one," said Honor; "we were trying to get our bearings."

"Just as well," said Hester, "the obliging footpads drove along to where they had left us; and then one of them threw a package down on the grass; they made us a fine bow and departed; and in the package was everything they had taken from us—"

"I'll bet it was some o' them college boys that's camping on Lake Wukabuc, jes' playing tricks!" cried Roger, "begging your pardon, ma'am."

"Possibly," said Hester; "we shan't try to find out; take the horses. Where's Danbury?"

Danbury carried Miss Laurens into the house; he put her into a chair, as she motioned. She turned a white and drawn face up to him. "Stop a second," she bade him; then, neither looking at him nor at her kinswomen, she added, "Mademoiselle will not return, nor Mr. Buckingham. I do not wish to hear their names again. If there are any questions or anything to be done, Mrs. Ridgely will attend to it."

"Yes, ma'am," said Danbury. He walked out of the room. He was properly solemn, but Hester told Grace, "His back radiated contentment!"

"That's all," said Miss Laurens, "you won't expect me to say I was a fool, will you? And you will keep Grace and the bishop and Isabel off the subject, won't you? And get them back from the inn. Dorothy, will you help me? I am going to bed. Honor, they'll tell you I wasn't afraid. I may be a fool, but I'm not a coward. Come up to my room in about half an hour."

Mrs. Wrenn wheeled her out of the room, while Honor stared, and found not a word. Hester sat down and began to chuckle. "What on earth does it mean?" gasped Honor, "did you get the boys—"

"Boys"—Hester giggled afresh—"boys; indeed, we put up the whole job, ourselves, in Uncle Ira's clothes; we've got 'em on, now. It was she, Mrs. Wrenn, who suggested it; we made it all up last night. I ran over here; I didn't really go to bed, you know. Boys! Why, Cousin Honor, dear, we were the highwaymen!"

DOROTHY OF THE MILL*

By Robert Barr

A painting of Elmsdell Mill might truthfully have been labeled "Peace." It occupied a romantic situation near the head of the valley. Above it lay the large millpond, or small lake, just as you choose to call it, placid in the sunlight, its margin, however, shaded by drooping trees, whose branches bent to drink, as it seemed, of the clear, still water. The pond was needed as a reservoir of power, for the mill was far up that valley, and the stream at this height was small. Lower down, where the rivulet became a river, there were mills in plenty that had no pond, and needed nothing more than a narrow channel cut to feed their small wheels. But Elmsdell Mill, to make the most of what water it had, possessed a wheel of great diameter, that the leverage of its spokes might make the most of the liquid force at its command. The stone mill itself was overgrown with ivy, and overshadowed by tall elms, and coming from the north, one would not suspect its existence, were it not for that mirror of a pond, which seemed framed with a green girdle. But the southern end of the mill was bare white stone in its lower story, overtopped by timber and plaster in the gable, and was a landmark for miles to any traveller coming up the winding road by the stream, he seeing the mill with its fringe of trees topping the upper valley.

It was a scene emblematic of the sweetest peace, yet was far from being typical of the state of affairs in England, for that grim fighter, Cromwell himself, was camped but half an hour's ride away down this vale of seeming content, resting from his latest battle, where he had put to flight those who scorned him, scattering them like chaff

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before the wind, and Dorothy, as with her apron she rubbed the white dust from the semi-obscured end window of the mill, saw a mounted man and a dozen foot soldiers hurrying up the road toward the mill. Dorothy was discontented with Cromwell, and thought him a most unreasonable man, yet had she cause for congratulation if she had only paused to think. Only the day before had a great fear been lifted from herself and her mother. News of a fierce battle had come to them, and after that, silence and racking anxiety, for her father and her two stalwart brothers were all three among Cromwell's forces. News of the conflict had been brought to that secluded vale by men who brought cart-loads of wheat which were weighed into the mill, each man accepting a statement on paper of the weight of his load, written by the miller's wife. This incursion of grain was entirely unexpected by the two women in the cottage on the opposite side of the road to the mill, and all the bringers could say was that they had been ordered by officers of the Parliamentary army to deliver what wheat they had to Elmsdell Mill. One wise yeoman said he thought it was because the mill stood so secluded, thus less likely to fall into the hands of the Royalists, noted throughout the land as being scandalously ignorant of their own country, while every inch of the shire was known to the Cromwellian soldiers, and in this surmise the old yeoman was doubtless right. These men said a terrible battle had been fought, but what the outcome was not one of them knew. Their duty was to bring wheat to the mill, and they were inclined to suppose that the less they interfered in the affairs of the mighty, the better for them, for no man yet knew how the cat was to jump, though all admitted Cromwell seemed to be having the best of it.

The first tidings that all was well with their own folk came by mounted messenger up the valley, hurrying his horse so that the women, seeing him come, had their worst moment ere he spoke, their tremor of fear augmented rather than assuaged by seeing on nearer approach that the speeding messenger was a neighbor's son, Standfast Standish by name; and yet in spite of this suspense Dorothy's fair cheeks colored, and her eyes were downcast as young Standish sprang from his horse.

"What has befallen? What has befallen?" cried the miller's wife.

"The Lord has given us a great victory," said Standish solemnly, "and has crushed the ungodly."

"Yes, yes," cried the woman, "but what about my man and my two sons?"

"They are well," said Standish, "untouched, though they were in the thick of it."

"Thank God, thank God," repeated the wife two or three times, and then Dorothy looked up, saying with something almost of reproach in her tones:

"Why then did you ride so fast? You frightened us."

"I ride, Doll, under orders that are not to be slighted. When Cromwell himself gives the word, horseflesh or manflesh must not be spared. His orders are to grind, grind, grind, and turn the corn into meal: the army must be fed."

"How are we to grind," demanded the girl, "when he has taken our millers from us?"

"There lies the water; there stands the mill. Is there no corn?" asked the young man.

"Corn enough; the mill is full of it," replied the girl.

"Then Cromwell says 'Grind.' "

"Does he expect me to do it?" she asked.

"He cares not who does it, so 'tis done. That is Cromwell's way," replied the lad.

"You will eat here before going farther?" interrupted Mistress Mitford.

"I go no farther," said the lad.

"Surely you go on to your own home, if but to let them see you are safe and sound!" protested the miller's wife.

"I have no such leave," replied Standish, "and must return at once; indeed, I scarce dare spare time to eat, but if you have a mug of ale—"

"Tut, tut," cried the good woman, "come in. There is ale in plenty, and a meat pie on the table such as you do not get in the army. Dorothy will hold your horse till you come out again."

"Indeed," said the young man archly, "I shall put her to no such task, but shall tie the horse's bridle to this ring in the wall, so that Dorothy may accompany us within,"

and he cast a meaning glance from under his steel cap at the girl, who tossed her head indifferently.

"You need not so trouble yourself, Mr. Standish," she said; "I make nothing of holding a horse, even for so long a time as you take to a meal."

The young man made no reply to this flippant remark, but securely tied the leather strap in the iron ring, then turning to her, the mother having disappeared within the cottage, he said earnestly:

"Doll, my time is short, but I hope it will be long enough for the small word 'yes.' "

"Indeed," said she, in no way abashed, " 'tis the longest word in the language for what it entails. Become a general, Standfast, and I'll say 'yes' right speedily. You know how ambitious I am, yet imprisoned here in this dull valley, with nothing happening."

"You do not value your good fortune," said the young man, solemnly. "Things happen elsewhere that are ill to look upon. Thank God for the quiet of the valley."

"I do," said the girl instantly, falling into his own mood of seriousness, "I do whenever I think of what is beyond."

"Then, Doll dear, will you not make the day brighter for one who has to go beyond, by saying the word I ask of you?" and with a clumsy attempt at lightness, he added, "Something will happen at once in this quiet valley if you do," whereupon he made an attempt to encircle her waist with his arm, but she whisked away from him.

"The word 'no,' " she said, "is even shorter than the one you mentioned. If you wish for brevity, why not accept that?"

Before he could reply, Mistress Mitford appeared at the door.

"I thought you were hurried," she said. "Your meat and malt are waiting for you."

"You will come in with me?" he whispered, pleading to the girl, who with flushed cheeks kept the distance more than arm's length between them.

"Yes, I shall come," she pouted, "I think I am safer by my mother's side than by yours," and so the two entered the cottage, the valiant Standish attacking the pie with no less valor than he had displayed in battle a few days before.

Mistress Mitford sat opposite him, and Dorothy some distance apart, the elder woman plying him with questions regarding the fight, which Standish answered with some reluctance, evidently wishing to forget it all. He had been a farmer before he was a fighter, and was not yet hardened to slaughter.

" 'Tis none so bad," he said, "when the fight is on, and one's blood is up, but afterwards, when the night falls and the groaning is heard while we search the battlefield, 'tis a doleful business, and, after all, whoever is right, and whoever in the wrong of it, 'tis sad to see Englishmen fight Englishmen. Frenchmen, now, were a different matter."

"We are all God's creatures," said the woman, shaking her head in despondency.

"Not Frenchmen," protested young Standfast, and neither of the two women was sure enough about it to contradict him.

After the meal the young man rode down the valley again, satisfied in body, if not in spirit.

And now the two women were confronted with the problem of working the mill. "Grind," commanded Cromwell, and he was not one to be disobeyed. It is likely that if the miller had not been blessed with two strong sons who acted as his assistants, wife and daughter might have understood better the machinery of the mill, but as it was they were at a loss how to proceed. If they turned on the water, they might wreck the machinery, and thus, although obeying in the letter, there would be disobedience in the spirit, with the problem of feeding the army thereby rendered more acute.

After much labor they filled with grain the huge bin shaped like an inverted pyramid, through which the wheat flowed to the stones, and then they determined to send a messenger to camp and request the presence of either the father or one of the two sons. This was done the morning after the visit of Standish, and now Dorothy stood by the flour-obscured window, rubbing its panes with her apron, watching the approaching cavalcade and wondering if this were the expedition sent to her rescue. In that case Cromwell was slightly overdoing it: she had asked for one man, not for a dozen.

As the procession came near, she recognized her father among the foot soldiers. A miller never distinguishes himself on horseback, so old Mitford trailed a pike instead of being one of Cromwell's mounted Ironsides.

A cavalryman took his stand in the middle of the road, while the foot soldiers rapidly surrounded the mill. The upper half of the door was open. Mitford, followed by two or three men, unfastened the lower leaf and entered, his daughter coming forward to meet them.

"Why is the mill not working, Dorothy?" he asked anxiously. "Didn't you get the general's command?"

"Mother and I were afraid to let on the water, fearing we might destroy the mill, instead of making meal."

"Tut, tut," cried the old man impatiently, "the mill would come to no harm. I'll show you what to do when we have finished our business. Have you seen any loiterers about?"

"No."

"None in cavalier dress?"

"Not one."

"Lord Dorincourt was taken prisoner, and has escaped. He is thought to have come up the valley, and may be concealed in the mill. Come, my lads, I know every nook and cranny where even a rat might hide. If his lordship is here, we'll soon have him out."

The old building was searched from raftered attics to moss-covered cellars dripping with water, but no trace of the Royalist was found within its walls.

"He is not here, I'll vouch for that," reported the begrimed miller to the man on horseback.

Every one was then set at beating the bushes and thicket surrounding the pond, but this, too, was labor lost. Meanwhile the miller turned on the water: the great wheel slowly revolved, and the flour came pouring out.

"There's nought to do but keep the hopper full, and work till the pond runs dry, which it will not do for some weeks yet," said the father.

Then the man on horseback gathered his followers, and departed fruitlessly down the hill again. Dorothy stood by the transparent pane and watched them until they were

finally shut from her sight. With a sigh she turned from the window, and then was startled by hearing a half-smothered voice cry:

"In the Fiend's name, Madam, are they gone? If so, I beg of you stop the mill."

She knew not from whence the voice came, but instinctively she turned to the lever, shut off the water, and the roar of machinery ceased.

"Who are you, and where are you?" she demanded.

For answer there were various sounds as of a man trying to clear his mouth so that he might speak. Then two hands appeared over the edge of the bin, whose load of wheat was still not perceptibly diminished, and a tousled head of blonde, curling hair rose up between the hands until a pair of sparkling eyes regarded her.

"A thousand thanks, my lady, for stopping the grinding stones. A moment more I had been gone between them, and the flower of my youth pulverized into flour for the Parliamentarians; curse them."

"You were in no danger," said the girl severely. "How came you there?"

"Are you alone, my lady?"

"Yes," replied the girl, backing toward the door.

"Let us thank God for that. Will you place me under further obligation by closing the door? Some one might pass, and really my apparel is in such a disarray that I have no anxiety to receive company."

"You are Lord Dorincourt," she said accusingly, without moving to realize his request.

"Oh, no, no, my fair girl," replied the unseen mouth, while the visible eyes laughed. "I am in reality Oliver Cromwell, but am so ashamed of the title that only the duress in which I find myself compels me to admit it."

"You are Lord Dorincourt," she repeated, with conviction.

"I was once, my lady, but not now, not now. I assure you I am a changed man, and I defy my dearest friend to recognize me. My doubtlet is as full of corn as ever were the tightest boots of the most bunion-footed Puritan that ever stepped."

"How dare you speak with levity, considering your danger?"

"Madam, you have just informed me that I am safe from the millstones."

"Yes, but not from the upper and nether millstones of the law."

"Dorothy, I am in no trouble from that source. To reach the hands of the rebels I must first be betrayed, and there is too much kindliness in your eyes to send even so worthless a fellow-creature as I to his death. In those charming and beautiful eyes I read, alas, disapproval of myself, but I see there no capital sentence, Mademoiselle Dorothy."

He had now raised himself up along the slanting boards until head and shoulders were above the rim of the bin. His doublet was fine, though sadly torn, but a tatter of throat gear remained to him, and his neck was scratched as if with brambles. His left arm he used with evident difficulty, and she saw the doublet cut away at the shoulder, and stained red as if from a wound but recently received. Her eyes moistened at this knowledge of his pitiable condition, so jauntily carried off, as if it were, upon the whole, a huge joke.

"How do you know my name is Dorothy?" she asked with less of accusation in her voice than had hitherto been the case.

"I heard your father call you so. 'Tis a lovely name, and lovingly I dwell on it," then seeing in her eyes a return of that disapproval which he had formerly noted, he added quickly: "I have a sister Dorothy, and an anxious girl she is this day, I warrant you, though her brother may have a jest on his parched lips, while mouth and throat are like the great desert with chaff and dust of the corn. Thus I venture to call you the Lady Dorothy, and again implore you to close that gaping door."

"No one passes this way," she said.

"Your pardon, Lady Dorothy, but those who have just gone may return. Surely you are not afraid of a wounded man?"

"We Puritans," she said proudly, "have no reason to fear: we can defend ourselves."

"Egad, Madam, and you speak truth," cried his lordship, laughing, "I can testify to that. I wish I had your courage. I fear the door opening upon the highway."

Without another word she went to the door and closed it. He made an attempt to throw a leg over the rim of his prison, but the exertion was too much for him, and he fell back groaning, his face going white like the flour that powdered the walls.

"Be not in such haste," she said, and taking a small stepladder she set it up against the bin, mounted lightly, and held out her hand to him. He smiled wanly up at her, and with her help was soon down upon the floor of the mill.

"Would you care for a mug of ale?" she asked him.

"Ale? Is there such a blessing in this ill-fated land? Has not that damned brewer—I humbly beg your pardon, Madam, I'm a wicked man and forgot myself—but that brewer Cromwell has driven ale and every other good thing out of the country he encumbers, thus ruining his own trade, curse him. Ale, did you say? It seems incredible! But angels may work miracles, therefore I shall believe that ale exists. And, Dorothy, a crust of bread for a starving dog!"

The girl, her compassion touched, fled to the house. The coast was clear, for her mother had walked down the valley with her father. When she returned he seized the tankard with an almost wolfish glitter in his eyes, and brought it near to his cracked lips. Then he thrust it from him and held it aloft, while his left hand removed the tattered hat, his wounded arm with difficulty obeying his will.

"The King! God bless him!" he cried.

"My lord, you dishonor hospitality," said Dorothy sternly. "I brought you the drink for no such toast."

He consumed half of what was in the tankard, before he set it down and replied, this time with more soberness than he had hitherto evinced:

"The texts are not all on your side, my Lady Dorothy. 'Fear God and honor the King,' says the Good Book. The hospitality of no household in England is dishonored when I obey the Bible, and pray God to bless the English King. Unfortunate man! Would that my prayer were as potent for him as this good ale is for me."

The young man was seated on the lowest step of the ladder, which still leaned against the bin of the hopper. His first thought had been to his thirst, and so he had taken a long drink from the generous flagon. Now, as he set it down on the stone floor, he remembered his supplication for a crust of bread when he saw on the broad trencher a heaping-up of meat pasty. He reached the trencher to his knees, and placed it there, then looked up at Dorothy with a smile, half whimsical, and wholly winning. She stood between him and the closed door, the light from the southern window enveloping her in luminous relief against the dark background of the wall. Her fair face was shadowed with perplexity, as she looked down on the young man smiling up at her, who, starving as he was, left for the moment his appetizing dish untouched.

He guessed her thoughts, and read his fate in those glorious, somber eyes. She was a true daughter of that vigorous race which had crumpled up the aristocracy of England as if it had been flimsy tinsel, which the young man began to suspect it really was. He saw that the girl pitied him as a hunted wanderer, but would nevertheless deliver him to his enemies as a traitor to his country. He knew that threats or persuasion would alike be useless, while, wounded and exhausted, he could not overcome her by physical force and thus accomplish his escape. Not even quiescence on her part would insure his safety. He must cross the marshy moor above the mill from which this stream took its source, and that journey were impossible unless he had a guide who knew the way. On the other side of the desolate moor, he was a free man once more. So he looked up at her smiling, and she looked down on him with deep melancholy. There was something in his glance and smile that filled her with vague uneasiness; she, the country maiden, he, the man of the world. Her eyes, clear and unpolluted as the crystal stream that turned the wheel; his, shadowed by the reflection of the city in fouler waters far below. She shivered a little, not relishing his scrutiny, and said with impatience:

"Sir, why do you not eat?"

"Dorothy, I dare not, until the problem in your mind is solved."

"There is no problem," she said shortly.

"Ah, yes, my lady, there is. Duty says harshly, 'Give him up to his foes'; humanity whispers, 'Mercy blesses her that gives and him that takes.' "

"I shall do my duty," she said, drawing a long, quivering breath.

"Then congratulations, Madam. The conflict is ended, and I shall not so wrong your gentle soul as to pretend that the victory has been welcome to you. Take away the trencher."

The young man leaned back wearily against the rounds of the ladder. His eyes closed, and his face went to a chalky whiteness. The girl, with a gasp of sympathy, took a step nearer to him.

"Surely you will eat?"

"Take it away: its very aroma is maddening to me. I have had nothing to eat for three days, save a mouthful of throat-parching corn while buried in this bin."

"Then why do you refuse now, when plenty is offered you? We do not starve our prisoners."

The young man sat up again, and was so inconsistent as to offer himself momentary refreshment from the lips of the flagon. The brief draft seemed to revive him.

"My Lady Dorothy, I am no prisoner of yours, nor are you authorized to hold me. I surrendered to your compassion, not to your vengeance. It is because of you I dare not eat. Were I in the tent of the most barbarous Arab that rides the desert, and did I break but a crust of bread with him, my life were sacred in his hands; yes, to be defended from peril even at risk of his own. Shall a Christian maiden in a civilized land be lower in the human scale than a heathen savage? Christ forbid! whose words, 'Neither do I condemn thee' should ring in every woman's ears."

"Eat, I beg of you," said Dorothy, with a sob.

"As a prisoner?" he asked, looking searchingly at her.

"No, no, as a hungry man. Finish your flagon, and I will refill it."

By the time she had returned with the brimming flagon, the pasty had well-nigh disappeared. All his old jauntiness had returned to the tattered noble.

"I swear to you, Dorothy, war is a stern schoolmaster. I understand now what I never could fathom before, why Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Yesterday I lay prone in a thicket of my own plantation. It was a foolish place to hide, for they said, 'He will make up the valley to his own estate,' and as I lay there with the Roundheads beating the bushes within twenty paces of me, the thought came to me: 'This land in which my face is buried is my birthright, and gladly would I sell it for a mess of pottage.' "

When the repast was finished, Dorothy took trencher and tankard to the house, and on her return the young man bolted the upper half of the mill door, which at the same time automatically sealed the lower half.

"I distrust this door," he said, seeing the girl seemed slightly alarmed at his action. "When it is open any chance passer-by may enter, and then it is too late to hide. Now he must knock."

"There are no chance passers-by in this lonely district," said the girl.

"Then there are those who come by design, and they are still more dangerous."

The young man had scarcely finished his sentence when the reality of his apprehension was made audible to them. There was a clatter of iron-shod hoofs on the hard road.

"A troop of horse!" he whispered, and seeing all color leave her face he added, as if she were the one in danger, "They are like to pass on, I think."

The first part of his sentence was as correct as the last part was inaccurate. A strenuous voice rang out; a voice the girl had never heard before, but which thrilled her with instant fear.

"Halt! Dismount, and surround the mill."

"By God, Cromwell himself!" cried the young man, his right hand instinctively reaching his swordless hip. "Cromwell here, and I weaponless," he added bitterly, as his empty right hand swung round to his side again. "Would I had a thousand lives to exchange for his pestilent existence! But to be trapped like a rat!"

"Come this way," said Dorothy, as she raised a trapdoor, "hurry, hurry!"

The young man followed her down into the dark and the damp, stumbling awkwardly. She, however, knew her road, and threw open a door in the outer wall that allowed some light to filter into the gloom. Outside was the dim skeleton of the great wheel.

"Step in here," she said breathlessly; "if the water is turned on, you will have to walk for your life."

She bolted the door upon him, and was on the upper floor an instant after, closing down the trapdoor.

"Open!" cried a voice from the outside, while a saber hilt smote three blows against the timber.

Dorothy instantly pulled back the bolt, and threw open the two leaves of the door. It needed no introducer to identify for her the scowling man in steel breastplate who stood before her.

"Who are you?" was his demand.

"Dorothy Mitford, sir, daughter of the miller."

"Why is the mill silent when I ordered it to grind?"

"It had been stopped but a short ten minutes since, sir. It was grinding all morning."

"Why was it stopped ten minutes since?"

"It is the dinner hour, sir."

"As I came up I saw you fly back and forth between the cottage and the mill. What were you doing?"

Fear had given place to anger at this rude questioning, so abrupt and discourteous, and this before all these men standing behind him, among whom, with heightened color, she recognized Standfast Standish.

"Sir," she said, "I must be fed as well as your army."

A grim smile flickered for an instant round those masterful lips, then disappeared as quickly as it came. He made no comment upon her pertness, but turned to one of his men and said:

"Go into the cottage, and see if two have dined there. Have you seen any strangers about?" asked Cromwell as before.

"In the morning there was a dozen, searching the mill. The only one among them that I knew was my father."

"You saw no one else?"

"I have not been out of the mill, sir, except to prepare

food. I have been grinding all morning, and no one has entered these doors, except myself."

"What is that ladder doing standing against the hopper?"

"I have been filling the hopper with corn."

At this juncture the man returned from the cottage.

"There is one empty trencher, sir, from which one person has fed."

Cromwell strode into the mill, and up the steps of the ladder, thrusting his sword half a dozen times down through the grain. Lucky for Lord Dorincourt that he was elsewhere. Satisfying himself that nothing but wheat was within the bin, the general descended, cast a suspicious glance at the girl, and said:

"We have traced him here. I am certain he is within these walls."

"I am certain he is not, sir," replied Dorothy, with all the assurance of exact truth. "My father knows every cranny of this mill, and he searched thoroughly."

"Humph," growled Cromwell, "begin the grinding again, and if he is among the machinery, let him take peril of it. Your reason for the stopping of the mill seems scant enough."

The girl walked promptly and proudly to the lever, drew it toward her, and instantly the low rumble of machinery began. She paid no further attention to her visitors, but went calmly to the scupper out of which poured the warm meal, and fingered its flow critically.

Cromwell's eyes never left her, and again the slight smile chased the darkness from his countenance as he saw the testing of the meal, an action well known to him, for he was a miller himself, but was now about to be discomfited, for he lived in a flat country where the waterwheels are small, and it never occurred to him that a waterwheel might act as prison for a man.

The general set his men at the second search of the mill, and this time the scrutiny was thorough enough to satisfy any one. He himself went outside, and mounted his horse, awaiting stolidly the result of the investigation. Relieved from the eye of the master, Standfast Standish

chose the lower portion of the mill as his ground for search, that perhaps he might exchange a word with Dorothy. She received his greetings coldly enough, and seemed still offended at the treatment the general had accorded her. Standfast himself, although he feared and admired his chief, was indignant that her word should not have been instantly taken, and he said this emphatically to Dorothy, which won him a kindlier look than he had yet obtained from her; then, seeking further ground of advantage, he said with enthusiasm:

"I know a place none of them have searched—the water-wheel. I'll go down the trapdoor and look to that myself."

The indifference fell away from the girl like a cloak flung off.

"You will not," she said.

"Why not? He might be there."

"He could not be there unless I led him to the wheel. There would be only one chance in a thousand for him to happen on the trapdoor."

"But," objected the stubborn youth, "a trapdoor is exactly what an escaped prisoner would look for."

"Even if he found it," she urged, "he would descend into darkness, and be little likely to find the door to the wheel."

"Still, it is possible," he persisted, "and there is no harm in looking."

"There is the harm that I forbid you."

"Why?"

"Are you General Cromwell, that you should question me thus?" she asked with rising anger, her eyes ablaze.

The young fellow gazed at her in astonishment, which gradually changed to an expression somewhat approaching distrust.

"General Cromwell," he said slowly, "seems to be much more far-seeing than I am. I am determined to search the wheel."

"Very well," she answered decisively, "do so, and take the penalty."

"What is the penalty?"

"That you never speak to me again as long as you live.

I will not have my word doubted by two men in the same day, though one is the highest and the other the lowest in the army."

With that she turned from him, and once more placed her trembling hand in the flow of meal. Out of the corner of her eye, however, she saw that her lover made no move to put his resolve into execution.

The men came down from the upper part of the mill, and reported the fruitlessness of their quest. A bugle call rang out, and those who surrounded the mill came hurrying to the road.

"Tell the girl to come here," said Cromwell. When she stood before him he went on:

"Are you alone in this mill?"

"No, sir, my mother is with me, although absent at this moment."

"Have you a brother?"

"Two of them, sir."

"Where are they?"

"In General Cromwell's army."

The general looked around him.

"Is any man here a miller?" he asked.

There was no response, until young Standish stepped forth.

"I am a miller," he said, a deep frown on his brow. The girl opened her mouth to contradict him, but closed it without speaking.

"You will remain here," said Cromwell; "the mill must run night and day until every sack of corn within it is ground. The women will look after it in the daytime, and you at night."

Cromwell wheeled his horse toward the south, his men falling in, two and two, behind him. The girl without a word re-entered the mill, Standish following. She went to the window, looking again through the pane that again needed dusting, watching the cavalcade now trotting smartly down the valley.

"Well, Dorothy," said the young man, "how much longer are you going to keep Lord Dorincourt in the wheel?"

"Until Cromwell and his men are entirely out of sight," she replied firmly, without turning round.

"Who led him to the wheel?"

"I did, the moment I heard the clatter of the horse. You said yesterday it was a pity Englishmen should kill Englishmen, therefore I attempted to save one man."

"Oh, his life has never been in danger; we do not kill our prisoners."

"Very well, stop the mill, and take him out. He is unarmed, and wounded, so his capture will be safe enough. Take him with you to the camp."

"Dorothy, you heard me say I was a miller."

"Yes, and I knew it was not true."

"I am willing to learn from you, Dorothy, but that is not the point. I am here by the general's orders as miller, not as soldier."

"What difference does that make?"

"The difference that if you are interested in Lord Dorincourt's life, or, rather, his liberty, I do not violate my oath as a soldier by leading him to safety across the moor."

The girl whirled round.

"Will you do that?" she cried.

"Yes, if you bid me."

"He is a poor, forlorn creature," she said, "even if he is a lord. Stop the mill, Standish, and I will release him."

She raised the trapdoor, and descended, while he pushed in the lever and throttled the mill. It was indeed a forlorn object that appeared out of the darkness of the trapdoor, a man drenched and dripping, but laughing nevertheless, though somewhat ruefully.

"I declare, Dorothy," he cried, as he came blinking into the daylight, "I shall never forget you, and I swear that you will never forget so comical a wretch as I. All I need now is an oven. First I was powdered with flour, then plastered with water, and thus the dough about me calls but for the baking, and I am a walking loaf."

"This young man," said Dorothy, somewhat breathlessly, "will lead you across the moor in safety."

"Egad," cried Lord Dorincourt, glancing without enthusiasm at Standish, "his uniform whispers that he is more likely to take me into Cromwell's camp."

Standish's fist had clenched angrily as he noted the

familiarity with which the young lord spoke to Dorothy, and his lips closed into a firm line.

"I will answer for him, my lord," she said, "because he who risks his liberty in your service is my promised husband."

The dripping lord made his most profound bow.

"Young man, I congratulate you. You adore the queen, even though you fight against the king."

But Standish heard him not: his face was aglow as he gazed at the blushing Dorothy.

BLUESKIN, THE PIRATE*

By Howard Pyle

I

Cape May and Cape Henlopen form, as it were, the upper and lower jaws of a gigantic mouth, which disgorges from its monstrous gullet the cloudy waters of the Delaware Bay, into the heaving, sparkling blue-green of the Atlantic Ocean. From Cape Henlopen as the lower jaw, there juts out a long, curving fang of high, smooth-rolling sand dunes, cutting sharp and clean against the still, blue sky above—silent, naked, utterly deserted, excepting for the squat, white-walled lighthouse standing upon the crest of the highest hill. Within this curving, sheltering hook of sand hills lie the smooth waters of Lewes Harbor, and, set a little back from the shore, the quaint old town, with its dingy, wooden houses of clapboard and shingle, looks sleepily out through the masts of the shipping lying at anchor in the harbor, to the purple, clean-cut, level thread of the ocean horizon beyond.

Lewes is a queer, odd, old-fashioned little town, smelling fragrant of salt marsh and sea breeze. It is rarely visited by strangers. The people who live there are the progeny of people who have lived there for many generations, and it is the very place to nurse, and preserve, and care for old legends and traditions of bygone times, until they grow from bits of gossip and news into local history of considerable size. As in the busier world men talk of last year's elections, here these old bits, and scraps, and odds and ends of history are retailed to the listener who cares to listen—traditions of the War of 1812, when Beresford's fleet lay off the harbor threatening to bombard the town, tales of the Revolution and of Earl Howe's warships tarrying for a

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while in the quiet harbor before they sailed up the river to shake old Philadelphia town with the thunders of their guns at Red Bank and Fort Mifflin.

With these substantial and sober threads of real history, other and more lurid colors are interwoven into the web of local lore—legends of the dark doings of famous pirates, of their mysterious, sinister comings and goings, of treasures buried in the sand dunes and pine barrens back of the cape and along the Atlantic beach to the southward.

Of such is the story of Blueskin, the pirate.

II

It was in the fall and the early winter of the year 1759, and again in the summer of the year following, that the famous pirate, Blueskin, became especially identified with Lewes as a part of its traditional history.

For some time, for three or four years, rumors and reports of Blueskin's doings in the West Indies and off the Carolinas had been brought in now and then by sea captains. There was no more cruel, bloody, desperate, devilish pirate than he in all those pirate-infested waters. All kinds of wild and bloody stories were current concerning him, but it never occurred to the good folk of Lewes that such stories were some time to be a part of their own history.

But one day a schooner came drifting into Lewes Harbor —shattered, wounded, her forecastle splintered, her foremast shot half away, and three great, tattered holes in her mainsail. The mate, with one of the crew, came ashore in the boat for help and a doctor. He reported that the captain and the cook were dead and there were three wounded men aboard. The story he told to the gathering crowd brought a very peculiar thrill to those who heard it. They had fallen in with Blueskin, he said, off Fenwick's Island, some twenty or thirty miles below the capes, and the pirates had come aboard of them; but, finding that the cargo of the schooner consisted only of cypress shingles and lumber, had soon quitted their prize. Perhaps Blueskin was disappointed at not finding a more valuable capture; perhaps the spirit of deviltry was hotter in him that morning than usual; anyhow, as the pirate craft bore away she fired three broad-

sides at short range into the helpless coaster. The captain had been killed at the first fire, the cook had died on the way up, three of the crew were wounded and the vessel was leaking fast, betwixt wind and water.

Such was the mate's story. It spread like wildfire and in half an hour all the town was in a ferment. Fenwick's Island was very near home; Blueskin might come sailing into the harbor at any minute and then—! In an hour Sheriff Jones had called together most of the able-bodied men of the town, muskets and rifles were taken down from the racks and chimney-places and every preparation was made to defend the place against the pirates should they come into the harbor and attempt to land.

But Blueskin did not come that day, nor did he come the next or the next. But on the afternoon of the third, the news went suddenly flying over the town that the pirates were inside the capes. As the report spread the people came running, men, women and children, to the green before the tavern, where a little knot of old seamen were gathered together, looking fixedly out toward the offing, talking in low voices. Two vessels, one barque-rigged, the other and smaller a sloop, were slowly creeping up the bay, a couple of miles or so away and just inside the cape. There appeared nothing remarkable about the two crafts, but the little crowd that continued gathering upon the green stood looking out across the bay at them none the less anxiously for that. They were sailing close-hauled to the wind, the sloop following in the wake of her consort as the pilot-fish follows in the wake of the shark.

The course they held did not lie toward the harbor but rather bore away toward the Jersey shore, and by and by it began to be apparent that Blueskin did not intend visiting the town. Nevertheless, those who stood looking did not draw a free breath until, after watching the two pirates for more than an hour and a half, they saw them, then about six miles away, suddenly put about and sail with a free wind out to sea again.

"The bloody villains have gone!" said old Captain Wolfe, shutting his telescope with a click.

But Lewes was not yet quit of Blueskin. Two days

later a half-breed from the bay of Indian River came up, bringing the news that the pirates had sailed into the inlet, some fifteen miles below Lewes, and had careened the barque to clean her.

Perhaps Blueskin did not care to stir up the country people against him, for the half-breed reported that the pirates were doing no harm, and that what they took from the farmers of Indian River and Rehoboth they paid for with good, hard money.

It was while the excitement over the pirates was at its highest fever heat that Levi West came home again.

III

Even in the middle of the last century, the gristmill, a couple of miles from Lewes, although it was at most but fifty or sixty years old, had all a look of weather-beaten age, for the cypress shingles, of which it was built, ripen in a few years of wind and weather to a silvery, hoary gray, and the white powdering of flour lent it a look as though the dust of ages had settled upon it, making the shadows within dim, soft, mysterious. A dozen willow trees shaded, with dappling, shivering ripples of shadow, the road before the mill door, and the mill itself, and the long, narrow, shingle-built, one-storied, hip-roofed dwelling-house. At the time of the story the mill had descended in a direct line of succession to Hiram White, the grandson of old Ephraim White, who had built it, it was said, in 1701.

Hiram White was only twenty-seven years old, but he was already in local repute as a "character." As a boy he was thought to be half-witted or "natural," and as is the case with such unfortunates in small country towns where everybody knows everybody, he was made a common sport and jest for the keener, crueler wits of the neighborhood. Now that he was grown to the ripeness of manhood he was still looked upon as being, to use a quaint expression, "slack," or "not jest right." He was heavy, awkward, ungainly and loose-jointed, and enormously, prodigiously strong. He had a lumpish, thick-featured face, with lips heavy and loosely hanging, that gave him an air of stupidity, half droll, half pathetic. His little eyes were set far

apart and flat with his face, his eyebrows were nearly white and his hair was of a sandy, colorless kind. He was singularly taciturn, lisping thickly when he did talk, and stuttering and hesitating in his speech, as though his words moved faster than his mind could follow. It was the custom for local wags to urge, or badger, or tempt him to talk, for the sake of the ready laugh that always followed the few thick, stammering words and the stupid drooping of the jaw at the end of each short speech. Perhaps Squire Hall was the only one in Lewes Hundred who misdoubted that Hiram was half-witted. He had had dealings with him and was wont to say that whoever bought Hiram White for a fool made a fool's bargain. Certainly, whether he had common wits or no, Hiram had managed his mill to pretty good purpose and was fairly well off in the world as prosperity went in southern Delaware and in those days. No doubt, had it come to the pinch, he might have bought some of his tormentors out three times over.

Hiram White had suffered quite a financial loss six months before, through that very Blueskin who was now lurking in the Indian River inlet. He had entered into a "venture" with Josiah Shippin, a Philadelphia merchant, to the tune of seven hundred pounds sterling. The money had been invested in a cargo of flour and corn meal which had been shipped to Jamaica by the barque *Nancy Lee*. The vessel had been captured by the pirates off Currituck Sound, the crew set adrift in the longboat and the barque herself and all her cargo burned to the water's edge.

Five hundred of the seven hundred pounds invested in the unfortunate "venture" was money bequeathed by Hiram's father, seven years before, to Levi West.

Eleazer White had been twice married, the second time to the widow West. She had brought with her, to her new home, a good-looking, long-legged, black-eyed, black-haired ne'er-do-well of a son, a year or so younger than Hiram. He was a shrewd, quick-witted lad, idle, shiftless, willful, ill-trained, perhaps, but as bright and keen as a pin. He was the very opposite to poor, dull Hiram. Eleazer White had never loved his son; he was ashamed of the poor, slack-witted oaf. Upon the other hand he was very fond of Levi

West, whom he always called "our Levi," and whom he treated in every way as though he was his own son. He tried to train the lad to work in the mill, and was patient beyond what the patience of most fathers would have been with his stepson's idleness and shiftlessness. "Never mind," he was used to say. "Levi'll come all right. Levi's as bright as a button."

It was one of the greatest blows of the old miller's life when Levi ran away to sea. In his last sickness the old man's mind constantly turned to his lost stepson. "Meby he'll come back again," said he, "and if he does I want you to be good to him, Hiram. I've done my duty by you and have left you the house and mill, but I want you to promise that if Levi comes back again you'll give him a home and a shelter under this roof if he wants one." And Hiram had promised to do as his father asked.

After Eleazer died it was found that he had bequeathed five hundred pounds to his "beloved stepson, Levi West," and had left Squire Hall as trustee.

Levi West had been gone nearly nine years and not a word had been heard from him; there could be little or no doubt that he was dead.

One day Hiram came into Squire Hall's office with a letter in his hand. It was the time of the old French war, and flour and corn meal were fetching fabulous prices in the British West Indies. The letter Hiram brought with him was from a Philadelphia merchant, Josiah Shippin, with whom he had had some dealings. Mr. Shippin proposed that Hiram should join him in sending a "venture" of flour and corn meal to Kingston, Jamaica. Hiram had slept upon the letter overnight and now he brought it to the old squire. Squire Hall read the letter, shaking his head the while. "Too much risk, Hiram!" said he. "Mr. Shippin wouldn't have asked you to go into this venture if he could have got anybody else to do so. My advice is that you let it alone. I reckon you've come to me for advice?" Hiram shook his head. "Ye haven't? What have ye come for then?"

"Seven hundred pounds," said Hiram.

"Seven hundred pounds!" said Squire Hall. "I haven't got seven hundred pounds to lend you, Hiram."

"Five hundred been left to Levi—I got hundred—raise hundred more on mortgage," said Hiram.

"Tut, tut, Hiram," said Squire Hall, "that'll never do in the world. Suppose Levi West should come back again, what then? I'm responsible for that money. If you wanted to borrow it now, for any reasonable venture, you should have it and welcome, but for such a wildcat scheme—"

"Levi never come back," said Hiram, "nine years gone —Levi's dead."

"Mebby he is," said Squire Hall, "but we don't know that."

"I'll give bond for security," said Hiram.

Squire Hall thought for a while in silence. "Very well, Hiram," said he, by and by, "if you'll do that. Your father left the money, and I don't see that it's right for me to stay his son from using it. But if it is lost, Hiram, and if Levi should come back, it will go well to ruin ye."

So Hiram White invested seven hundred pounds in the Jamaica venture, and every farthing of it was burned by Blueskin, off Currituck Sound.

IV

Sally Martin was said to be the prettiest girl in Lewes Hundred, and when the rumor began to leak out that Hiram White was courting her the whole community took it as a monstrous joke. It was the common thing to greet Hiram himself with, "Hey, Hiram; how's Sally?" Hiram never made answer to such salutations, but went his way as heavily, as impassively, as dully as ever.

The joke was true. Twice a week, rain or shine, Hiram White never failed to scrape his feet upon Billy Martin's doorstep. Twice a week, on Sundays and Thursdays, he never failed to take his customary seat by the kitchen fire. He rarely said anything by way of talk; he nodded to the farmer, to his wife, to Sally and, when he chanced to be at home, to her brother, but he ventured nothing further. There he would sit from half past seven until nine o'clock, stolid, heavy, impassive, his dull eyes following now one of the family and now another, but always coming back again to Sally. It sometimes happened that she had other com-

pany, some one of the young men of the neighborhood. The presence of such seemed to make no difference to Hiram; he bore whatever broad jokes might be cracked upon him, whatever grins, whatever giggling might follow those jokes, with the same patient impassiveness. There he would sit, silent, unresponsive; then, at the first stroke of nine o'clock, he would rise, shoulder his ungainly person into his overcoat, twist his head into his three-cornered hat, and, with a "Good night, Sally, I be going now," would take his departure, shutting the door carefully to behind him.

Never, perhaps, was there a girl in the world had such a lover and such a courtship as Sally Martin.

V

It was one Thursday evening in the latter part of November, about a week after Blueskin's appearance off the capes, and while the one subject of talk was of the pirates being in Indian River inlet. The air was still and wintry; a sudden cold snap had set in and skims of ice had formed over puddles in the road; the smoke from the chimneys rose straight in the quiet air and voices sounded loud, as they do in frosty weather.

Hiram White sat by the dim light of a tallow dip, poring laboriously over some account books. It was not quite seven o'clock, and he never started for Billy Martin's before that hour. As he ran his finger slowly and hesitatingly down the column of figures, he heard the kitchen door beyond open and shut, the noise of footsteps crossing the floor and the scraping of a chair dragged forward to the hearth. Then came the sound of a basket of corncobs being emptied on the smoldering blaze and then the snapping and crackling of the reanimated fire. Hiram thought nothing of all this, excepting in a dim sort of way, that it was Bob, the negro mill hand, or old, black Dinah, the housekeeper, and so went on with his calculations.

At last, he closed the books with a snap, and, smoothing down his hair, arose, took up the candle, and passed out of the room into the kitchen beyond.

A man was sitting in front of the corncob fire that flamed and blazed in the great, gaping, sooty fireplace. A rough

overcoat was flung over the chair behind him and his hands were spread out to the roaring warmth. At the sound of the lifted latch and of Hiram's entrance he turned his head, and when Hiram saw his face he stood suddenly still as though turned to stone. The face, marvelously altered and changed as it was, was the face of his stepbrother, Levi West. He was not dead; he had come home again. For a time not a sound broke the dead, unbroken silence excepting the crackling of the blaze in the fireplace and the sharp ticking of the tall clock in the corner. The one face, dull and stolid, with the light of the candle shining upward over its lumpy features, looked fixedly, immovably, stonily at the other, sharp, shrewd, cunning, the red, wavering light of the blaze shining upon the high cheek-bones, cutting sharp on the nose and twinkling in the glassy turn of the black, ratlike eyes. Then suddenly that face cracked, broadened, spread to a grin. "I have come back again, Hi," said Levi, and at the sound of the words the speechless spell was broken.

Hiram answered never a word but he walked to the fireplace, set the candle down upon the dusty mantel-shelf among the boxes and bottles, and drawing forward a chair upon the other side of the hearth, sat down.

His dull, little eyes never moved from his stepbrother's face. There was no curiosity in his expression, no surprise, no wonder. The heavy under lip dropped a little further open and there was more than usual of dull, expressionless stupidity upon the lumpish face; but that was all.

As was said, the face upon which he looked was strangely, marvelously changed from what it had been when he had last seen it nine years before, and, though it was still the face of Levi West, it was a very different Levi West than the shiftless ne'er-do-well who had run away to sea in the Brazilian brig that long time ago. That Levi West had been a rough, careless, happy-go-lucky fellow; thoughtless and selfish, but with nothing essentially evil or sinister in his nature. The Levi West that now sat in a rush-bottom chair at the other side of the fireplace had that stamped upon his front that might be both evil and sinister. His swart complexion was tanned to an Indian copper. On

one side of his face was a curious discoloration in the skin and a long, crooked, cruel scar that ran diagonally across forehead and temple and cheek in a white, jagged seam. This discoloration was of a vivid blue, about the tint of a tattoo mark. It made a patch the size of a man's hand, lying across the cheek and the side of the neck. Hiram could not keep his eyes from this mark and the white scar cutting across it.

There was an odd sort of incongruity in Levi's dress; a pair of heavy gold earrings, and a dirty red handkerchief knotted loosely around his neck, beneath an open collar, displaying to its full length the lean, sinewy throat with its bony "Adam's apple," gave to his costume somewhat the smack of a sailor. He wore a coat that had once been of a fine plum color—now stained and faded—too small for his lean length, and furbished with tarnished lace. Dirty cambric cuffs hung at his wrists and on his fingers were half a dozen or more rings, set with stones that shone, and glistened, and twinkled in the light of the fire. The hair at either temple was twisted into a Spanish curl, plastered flat to the cheek, and a plaited queue hung halfway down his back.

Hiram, speaking never a word, sat motionless, his dull, little eyes travelling slowly up and down and around and around his stepbrother's person.

Levi did not seem to notice his scrutiny, leaning forward, now with his palms spread out to the grateful warmth, now rubbing them slowly together. But at last he suddenly whirled his chair around, rasping on the floor, and faced his stepbrother. He thrust his hand into his capacious coat pocket and brought out a pipe which he proceeded to fill from a skin of tobacco. "Well, Hi," said he, "d'ye see I've come back home again?"

"Thought you was dead," said Hiram dully.

Levi laughed, then he drew a red-hot coal out of the fire, put it upon the bowl of the pipe and began puffing out clouds of pungent smoke. "Nay, nay," said he, "not dead—not dead by odds. But—[puff]—by the Eternal Holy, Hi, I played many a close game—[puff]—with old Davy Jones, for all that."

Hiram's look turned inquiringly toward the jagged scar, and Levi caught the slow glance. "You're lookin' at this," said he, running his finger down the crooked seam. "That looks bad, but it wasn't so close as this," laying his hand for a moment upon the livid stain. "A coolie devil off Singapore gave me that cut when we fell foul of an opium junk in the China Sea four years ago last September. This," touching the disfiguring blue patch again, "was a closer miss, Hi. A Spanish captain fired a pistol at me down off Santa Catharina. He was so nigh that the powder went under the skin and it'll never come out again. Damn his eyes! he had better have fired that pistol into his own head that morning. But never mind that. I reckon I'm changed, ain't I, Hi?"

He took his pipe out of his mouth and looked inquiringly at Hiram, who nodded.

Levi laughed. "Devil doubt it," said he, "but whether I'm changed or no, I'll take my affidavy that you are the same old, half-witted Hi that you used to be. I remember Dad used to say that you hadn't no more than enough wits to keep you out of the rain. And, talking of Dad, Hi, I hearn tell he's been dead now these nine years gone. D'ye know what I've come home for?"

Hiram shook his head.

"I've come for that five hundred pounds that Dad left me when he died, for I hearn tell of that, too."

Hiram sat quite still for a second or two and then he said, "I put that money out to venture and lost it all."

Levi's face fell and he took his pipe out of his mouth, regarding Hiram sharply and keenly. "What d'ye mean?" said he presently.

"I thought you was dead—and I put—seven hundred pounds—into Nancy Lee—and Blueskin burned her—off Currituck."

"Burned her off Currituck!" repeated Levi. Then suddenly a light seemed to break upon his comprehension. "Burned by Blueskin!" he repeated, and thereupon flung himself back in his chair and burst into a short, boisterous fit of laughter. "Well, by the Holy Eternal, Hi, if that isn't a piece of your tarnal luck. Burned by Blueskin, was

it?" He paused for a moment, as though turning it over in his mind. Then he laughed again. "All the same," said he presently, "d'ye see I can't suffer for Blueskin's doings. The money was willed to me, fair and true, and you have got to pay it, Hiram White, burn or sink, Blueskin or no Blueskin." Again he puffed for a moment or two in reflective silence. "All the same, Hi," said he, once more resuming the thread of talk, "I don't reckon to be too hard on you. You be only half-witted anyway, and I sha'n't be too hard on you. I give you a month to raise that money, and while you're doing it I'll jest hang around here. I've been in trouble, Hi, d'ye see? I'm under a cloud and so I want to keep here, as quiet as may be. I'll tell ye how it came about: I had a set-to with a land pirate in Philadelphia, and somebody got hurt. That's the reason I'm here now, and don't you say anything about it. Do you understand?"

Hiram opened his lips as though it was his intent to answer, then seemed to think better of it and contented himself by nodding his head.

That Thursday night was the first for a six-month that Hiram White did not scrape his feet clean at Billy Martin's doorstep.

VI

Within a week Levi West had pretty well established himself among his old friends and acquaintances, though upon a different footing from that of nine years before, for this was a very different Levi from that other. Nevertheless, he was none the less popular in the bar-room of the tavern and at the country store, where he was always the center of a group of loungers. His nine years seemed to have been crowded full of the wildest of wild adventures and happenings, as well by land as by sea, and, given an appreciative audience, he would reel off his yarns by the hour, in a reckless, devil-may-care fashion that set agape even old sea dogs who had sailed the western ocean since boyhood. Then he seemed always to have plenty of money, and he loved to spend it at the tavern tap-room, with a lavishness that was at once the wonder and admiration of his gossips.

At that time, as was said, Blueskin was the one engross-

ing topic of talk, and it added not a little to Levi's prestige when it was found that he had actually often seen that bloody, devilish pirate with his own eyes. A great, heavy, burly fellow, Levi said he was, with a beard as black as a hat—a devil with his sword and pistol afloat, but not so black as he was painted when ashore. He told of many adventures in which Blueskin figured, and was then always listened to with more than usual gaping interest.

As for Blueskin, the quiet way in which the pirates conducted themselves at Indian River almost made the Lewes folk forget what he could do when the occasion called. They almost ceased to remember that poor, shattered schooner that had crawled with its ghastly dead and groaning wounded into the harbor a couple of weeks since. But if for a while they forgot who or what Blueskin was, it was not for long.

One day a barque from Bristol, England, bound for Cuba and laden with a valuable cargo of cloth stuffs and silks, put into Lewes harbor to take in water. The captain himself came ashore and was at the tavern for two or three hours. It happened that Levi was there and that the talk was of Blueskin. The English captain, a grizzled old sea dog, listened to Levi's yarns with not a little contempt. He had, he said, sailed in the China Sea and the Indian Ocean too long to be afraid of any hog-eating Yankee pirate such as this Blueskin. A junk full of coolies armed with stinkpots was something to speak of, but who ever heard of the likes of Blueskin falling afoul of anything more than a Spanish canoe or a Yankee coaster.

Levi grinned. "All the same, my hearty," said he, "if I was you I'd give Blueskin a wide berth. I hear that he's cleaned the vessel that was careened a while ago, and mebby he'll give you a little trouble if you come too nigh him."

To this the Englishman only answered that Blueskin might be damned, and that the next afternoon, wind and weather permitting, he intended to heave anchor and run out to sea.

Levi laughed again. "I wish I might be here to see what'll happen," said he, "but I'm going up the river tonight to see a gal and mebby won't be back agin for three or four days."

The next afternoon the English barque set sail as the captain promised, and that night Lewes town was awake until almost morning, gazing at a broad, red glare that lit up the sky away toward the southeast. Two days afterward a negro oysterman came up from Indian River with news that the pirates were lying off the inlet, bringing ashore bales of goods from their larger vessel and piling the same upon the beach under tarpaulins. He said that it was known down at Indian River that Blueskin had fallen foul of an English barque, had burned her and had murdered the captain and all but three of the crew, who had joined with the pirates.

The excitement over this terrible happening had only begun to subside when another occurred to cap it. One afternoon a ship's boat, in which were five men and two women, came rowing into Lewes harbor. It was the longboat of the Charleston packet, bound for New York, and was commanded by the first mate. The packet had been attacked and captured by the pirates about ten leagues south by east off Cape Henlopen. The pirates had come aboard of them at night and no resistance had been offered. Perhaps it was that circumstance that saved the lives of all, for no murder or violence had been done. Nevertheless, officers, passengers and crew had been stripped of everything of value and set adrift in the boats and the ship herself had been burned. The longboat had become separated from the others during the night and had sighted Henlopen a little after sunrise.

It may be here said that Squire Hall made out a report of these two occurrences and sent it up to Philadelphia by the mate of the packet. But for some reason it was nearly four weeks before a sloop of war was sent around from New York. In the meanwhile, the pirates had disposed of the booty stored under the tarpaulins on the beach at Indian River inlet, shipping some of it away in two small sloops and sending the rest by wagons somewhere up the country.

VII

Levi had told the English captain that he was going up country to visit one of his lady friends. He was gone nearly

two weeks. Then once more he appeared, as suddenly, as unexpectedly, as he had done when he first returned to Lewes. Hiram was sitting at supper when the door opened and Levi walked in, hanging up his hat behind the door as unconcernedly as though he had only been gone an hour. He was in an ugly, lowering humor and sat himself down at the table without uttering a word, resting his chin upon his clenched fist and glowering fixedly at the corn cake while Dinah fetched him a plate and knife and fork.

His coming seemed to have taken away all of Hiram's appetite. He pushed away his plate and sat staring at his stepbrother, who presently fell to at the bacon and eggs like a famished wolf. Not a word was said until Levi had ended his meal and filled his pipe. "Look'ee, Hiram," said he, as he stooped over the fire and raked out a hot coal. "Look'ee, Hiram! I've been to Philadelphia, d'ye see, a-settlin' up that trouble I told you about when I first come home. D'ye understand? D'ye remember? D'ye get it through your skull?" He looked around over his shoulder, waiting as though for an answer. But getting none, he continued: "I expect two gentlemen here from Philadelphia tonight. They're friends of mine and are coming to talk over the business, and ye needn't stay at home, Hi. You can go out somewhere, d'ye understand?" And then he added, with a grin, "Ye can go to see Sally."

Hiram pushed back his chair and arose. He leaned with his back against the side of the fireplace. "I'll stay at home," said he presently.

"But I don't want you to stay at home, Hi," said Levi. "We'll have to talk business and I want you to go!"

"I'll stay at home," said Hiram again.

Levi's brow grew as black as thunder. He ground his teeth together and for a moment or two it seemed as though an explosion was coming. But he swallowed his passion with a gulp. "You're a damned pig-headed, half-witted fool," said he. Hiram never so much as moved his eyes. "As for you," said Levi, whirling round upon Dinah, who was clearing the table, and glowering balefully upon the old negress, "you put them things down and get out of here. Don't you come nigh this kitchen again till I tell ye to.

If I catch you pryin' around—may I be damned, eyes and liver, if I don't cut your heart out."

* *

In about half an hour Levi's friends came; the first a little, thin, weazened man with a very foreign look. He was dressed in a rusty, black suit and wore gray yarn stockings and shoes with brass buckles. The other was also plainly a foreigner. He was dressed in sailor fashion, with petticoat breeches of duck, a heavy pea-jacket and thick boots, reaching to the knees. He wore a red sash tied around his waist, and once, as he pushed back his coat, Hiram saw the glitter of a pistol butt. He was a powerful, thickset man, low-browed and bull-necked, his cheek, and chin, and throat closely covered with a stubble of blue-black beard. He wore a red kerchief tied around his head and over it a cocked hat, edged with tarnished gilt braid.

Levi himself opened the door to them. He exchanged a few words outside with his visitors, in a foreign language of which Hiram understood nothing. Neither of the two strangers spoke a word to Hiram; the little man shot him a sharp look out of the corners of his eyes and the burly ruffian scowled blackly at him, but beyond that neither vouchsafed him any regard.

Levi drew to the shutters, shot the bolt in the outer door and tilted a chair against the latch of the one that led from the kitchen into the adjoining room. Then the three worthies seated themselves at the table which Dinah had half cleared of the supper china, and were presently deeply engrossed over a packet of papers which the big, burly man had brought with him in the pocket of his pea-jacket. The conference was conducted throughout in the same foreign language which Levi had used when first speaking to them —a language quite unintelligible to Hiram's ears. Now and then the murmur of talk would rise loud and harsh over some disputed point; now and then it would sink away to whispers.

Twice the tall clock in the corner whirred and sharply struck the hour, but throughout the whole long consultation Hiram stood silent, motionless as a stock, his eyes fixed almost unwinkingly upon the three heads grouped close to-

gether around the dim, flickering light of the candle and the papers scattered upon the table.

Suddenly the talk came to an end, the three heads separated and the three chairs were pushed back, grating harshly. Levi rose, went to the closet and brought thence a bottle of Hiram's apple brandy, as coolly as though it belonged to himself. He set three tumblers and a crock of water upon the table and each helped himself liberally.

As the two visitors departed down the road, Levi stood for a while at the open door, looking after the dusky figures until they were swallowed in the darkness. Then he turned, came in, shut the door, shuddered, took a final dose of the apple brandy and went to bed, without, since his first suppressed explosion, having said a single word to Hiram.

Hiram, left alone, stood for a while, silent, motionless as ever, then he looked slowly about him, gave a shake of the shoulders as though to arouse himself, and, taking the candle, left the room, shutting the door noiselessly behind him.

VIII

This time of Levi West's unwelcome visitation was indeed a time of bitter trouble and tribulation to poor Hiram White. Money was of very different value in those days than it is now, and five hundred pounds was in its way a good round lump—in Sussex County it was almost a fortune. It was a desperate struggle for Hiram to raise the amount of his father's bequest to his stepbrother. Squire Hall, as may have been gathered, had a very warm and friendly feeling for Hiram, believing in him when all others disbelieved; nevertheless, in the matter of money the old man was as hard and as cold as adamant. He would, he said, do all he could to help Hiram, but that five hundred pounds must and should be raised—Hiram must release his security bond. He would loan him, he said, three hundred pounds, taking a mortgage upon the mill. He would have lent him four hundred but that there was already a first mortgage of one hundred pounds upon it, and he would not dare to put more than three hundred more atop of that.

Hiram had a considerable quantity of wheat which he had bought upon speculation and which was then lying idle

in a Philadelphia storehouse. This he had sold at public sale and at a very great sacrifice—he realized barely one hundred pounds upon it. The financial horizon looked very black to him; nevertheless, Levi's five hundred pounds were raised and paid into Squire Hall's hands and Squire Hall released Hiram's bond.

The business was finally closed on one cold, gray afternoon in the early part of December. As Hiram tore his bond across and then tore it across again and again, Squire Hall pushed back the papers upon his desk and cocked his feet upon its slanting top. "Hiram," said he abruptly, "Hiram, do you know that Levi West is forever hanging around Billy Martin's house, after that pretty daughter of his?"

So long a space of silence followed the speech that the Squire began to think that Hiram might not have heard him. But Hiram had heard. "No," said he, "I didn't—know it."

"Well, he is," said Squire Hall. "It's the talk of the whole neighborhood. The talk's pretty bad, too. D'ye know that they say she was away from home three days last week, nobody knew where? The fellow's turned her head with his sailor's yarns and his traveller's lies."

Hiram said not a word, but he sat looking at the other in stolid silence. "That stepbrother of yours," continued the old Squire presently, "is a rascal—he is a rascal, Hiram, and I misdoubt he's something worse. I hear he's been seen in some queer places and with queer company of late."

He stopped again and still Hiram said nothing. "And look'ee, Hiram," the old man resumed suddenly, "I do hear that you be courtin' the girl, too; is that so?"

"Yes," said Hiram, "I'm courtin' her, too."

"Tut! tut!" said the Squire, "that's a pity, Hiram. I'm afraid your cakes are dough."

After he had left the Squire's office, Hiram stood for a while in the street, bareheaded, his hat in his hand, staring unwinkingly down at the ground at his feet, with stupidly drooping lips and lackluster eyes. Presently he raised his hand and began slowly smoothing down the sandy shock

of hair upon his forehead. At last he aroused himself with a shake, looked dully up and down the street, and then, putting on his hat, turned and walked slowly and heavily away.

The early dusk of the cloudy, winter evening was settling fast, for the sky was leaden and threatening. At the outskirts of the town Hiram stopped again, and again stood for a while in brooding thought. Then, finally, he turned slowly, not the way that led homeward, but taking the road that led between the bare and withered fields and crooked fences toward Billy Martin's.

It would be hard to say just what it was that led Hiram to seek Billy Martin's house at that time of day—whether it was fate or ill fortune. He could not have chosen a more opportune time to confirm his own undoing. What he saw was the very worst that his heart feared.

Along the road, at a little distance from the house, was a mock-orange hedge, now bare, naked, leafless. As Hiram drew near he heard footsteps approaching and low voices. He drew back into the fence corner and there stood, half sheltered by the stark network of twigs. Two figures passed slowly along the gray of the roadway in the gloaming. One was his stepbrother, the other was Sally Martin. Levi's arm was around her; he was whispering into her ear, and her head rested upon his shoulder.

Hiram stood as still, as breathless, as cold as ice. They stopped upon the side of the road just beyond where he stood. Hiram's eyes never left them. There for some time they talked together in low voices, their words now and then reaching the ears of that silent, breathless listener.

Suddenly there came the clattering of an opening door, and then Betty Martin's voice broke the silence, harshly, shrilly: "Sal!—Sal!—Sally Martin! You, Sally Martin! Come in yere. Where be ye!"

The girl flung her arms around Levi's neck and their lips met in one quick kiss. The next moment she was gone, flying swiftly, silently down the road past where Hiram stood, stooping as she ran. Levi stood looking after her until she was gone; then he turned and walked away whistling.

His whistling died shrilly into silence in the wintry distance, and then at last Hiram came stumbling out from the hedge. His face had never looked before as it looked then.

IX

Hiram was standing in front of the fire with his hands clasped behind his back. He had not touched the supper on the table. Levi was eating with an appetite. Suddenly he looked over his plate to his stepbrother.

"How about that five hundred pounds, Hiram?" said he. "I gave ye a month to raise it and the month ain't quite up yet, but I'm goin' to leave this here place day after tomorrow—by next day at the furd'st—and I want the money that's mine."

"I paid it to Squire Hall today and he has it for ye," said Hiram dully.

Levi laid down his knife and fork with a clatter. "Squire Hall!" said he, "what's Squire Hall got to do with it? Squire Hall didn't have the use of that money. It was you had it and you have got to pay it back to me, and if you don't do it, by God, I'll have the law on you, sure as you're born."

"Squire Hall's trustee—I hain't your trustee," said Hiram, in the same dull voice.

"I don't know nothing about trustees," said Levi, "or anything about lawyer-business, either. What I want to know is, are you going to pay me my money or no?"

"No," said Hiram, "I ain't—Squire Hall'll pay ye; you go to him."

Levi West's face grew purple red. He pushed back, his chair grating harshly. "You bloody land pirate!" he said, grinding his teeth together. "I see through your tricks. You're up to cheating me out of my money. You know very well that Squire Hall is down on me, hard and bitter; writin' his damn reports to Philadelphia and doing all he can to stir up everybody agin me and to bring the bluejackets down on me. I see through your tricks as clear as glass, but ye shan't trick me. I'll have my money if there's law in the land, ye bloody, natural thief ye, who'd go agin your dead father's will!"

Then, if the roof had fallen in upon him, Levi West could not have been more amazed. Hiram suddenly strode forward, and, leaning half across the table with his fists clenched, fairly glared into Levi's eyes. His face, dull, stupid, wooden, was now fairly convulsed with passion. The great veins stood out upon his temples like knotted whipcords, and when he spoke his voice was more a breathless snarl than the voice of a Christian man.

"Ye'll have the law, will ye?" said he. "Ye'll have the law, will ye? You're afeard to go to law, Levi West; you try th' law and see how ye like it! Who're you to call me a thief, ye bloody, murderin' villin ye! You're the thief, Levi West; you come here and stole my daddy from me, ye did. You make me ruin myself to pay what oughter to been mine, then, ye—ye steal the gal I was courtin', to boot." He stopped and his lips writhed for words to say. "I know ye," said he, grinding his teeth. "I know ye! And only for what my daddy made me promise, I'd a-had you up to the magistrate's before this."

Then, pointing with quivering finger: "There's the door —you see it! Go out that there door and don't never come into it again; if ye do, or if ye ever come where I can lay eyes on ye again, by th' Holy Holy I'll hale ye up to the Squire's office and tell all I know and all I've seen. Oh, I'll give ye your belly-fill of law if ye want th' law! Git out of the house, I say!"

As Hiram spoke Levi seemed to shrink together. His face changed from its copper color to a dull, waxy yellow. When the other ended he answered never a word. But he pushed back his chair, rose, put on his hat and, with a furtive, sidelong look, left the house, without stopping to finish the supper which he had begun. He never entered Hiram White's door again.

X

Hiram had driven out the evil spirit from his home, but the mischief that it had brewed was done and could not be undone. The next day it was known that Sally Martin had run away from home, and that she had run away with Levi West. Old Billy Martin had been in town in the morning with his rifle, hunting for Levi and threatening if he caught him to have his life for leading his daughter astray.

As the evil spirit had left Hiram's house, so had another and a greater evil spirit quitted its harborage. It was heard from Indian River in a few days more that Blueskin had quitted the inlet and had sailed away to the southeast, and it was reported, by those who seemed to know, that he had finally quitted those parts.

It was well for himself that Blueskin had left when he did, for not three days after he sailed away the *Scorpion* sloop-of-war dropped anchor in Lewes Harbor. The New York agent of the unfortunate packet and a government commissioner had also come aboard the *Scorpion.*

Without loss of time, the officer in command instituted a keen and searching examination that brought to light some singularly curious facts. It was found that a very friendly understanding must have existed for some time between the pirates and the people of Indian River, for, in the houses throughout that section, many things, some of considerable value, that had been taken by the pirates from the packet, were discovered and seized by the commissioner. Valuables of a suspicious nature had found their way even into the houses of Lewes itself.

The whole neighborhood seemed to have become more or less tainted by the presence of the pirates.

Even poor Hiram White did not escape the suspicions of having had dealings with them. Of course the examiners were not slow in discovering that Levi West had been deeply concerned with Blueskin's doings.

Old Dinah and black Bob were examined, and not only did the story of Levi's two visitors come to light, but also the fact that Hiram was present and with them while they were in the house disposing of the captured goods to their agent.

Of all that he had endured, nothing seemed to cut poor Hiram so deeply and keenly as these unjust suspicions. They seemed to bring the last bitter pang, hardest of all to bear.

Levi had taken from him his father's love; he had driven him, if not to ruin, at least perilously close to it. He had run away with the girl he loved, and now, through him, even Hiram's good name was gone.

Neither did the suspicions against him remain passive; they became active.

Goldsmiths' bills, to the amount of several thousand pounds, had been taken in the packet and Hiram was examined with an almost inquisitorial closeness and strictness as to whether he had or had not knowledge of their whereabouts.

Under his accumulated misfortunes, he grew not only more dull, more taciturn, than ever, but gloomy, moody, brooding as well. For hours he would sit staring straight before him into the fire, without moving so much as a hair.

One night—it was a bitterly cold night in February, with three inches of dry and gritty snow upon the ground —while Hiram sat thus brooding, there came, of a sudden, a soft tap upon the door.

Low and hesitating as it was, Hiram started violently at the sound. He sat for a while, looking from right to left. Then suddenly pushing back his chair, he arose, strode to the door and flung it wide open.

It was Sally Martin.

Hiram stood for a while staring blankly at her. It was she who first spoke. "Won't you let me come in, Hi?" said she. "I'm nigh starved with the cold and I'm fit to die, I'm so hungry. For God's sake, let me come in."

"Yes," said Hiram, "I'll let you come in, but why don't you go home?"

The poor girl was shivering and chattering with the cold; now she began crying, wiping her eyes with the corner of a blanket in which her head and shoulders were wrapped. "I have been home, Hiram," she said, "but dad, he shut the door in my face. He cursed me just awful, Hi—I wish I was dead!"

"You better come in," said Hiram. "It's no good standing out there in the cold." He stood aside and the girl entered, swiftly, gratefully.

At Hiram's bidding black Dinah presently set some food before Sally and she fell to eating ravenously, almost ferociously. Meantime, while she ate, Hiram stood with his back to the fire, looking at her face—that face once so round and rosy, now thin, pinched, haggard.

"Are ye sick, Sally?" said he presently.

"No," said she, "but I've had pretty hard times since I left home, Hi." The tears sprang to her eyes at the recollection of her troubles, but she only wiped them hastily away with the back of her hand, without stopping in her eating.

A long pause of dead silence followed. Dinah sat crouched together on a cricket at the other side of the hearth listening with interest. Hiram did not seem to see her. "Did you go off with Levi?" said he at last, speaking abruptly. The girl looked up furtively under her brows. "You needn't be afeared to tell," he added.

"Yes," said she at last, "I did go off with him, Hi."

"Where've you been?"

At the question she suddenly laid down her knife and fork. "Don't you ask me that, Hi," said she, agitatedly, "I can't tell you that. You don't know Levi, Hiram; I darsn't tell you anything he don't want me to. If I told you where I been he'd hunt me out, no matter where I was, and kill me. If you only knew what I know about him, Hiram, you wouldn't ask anything about him."

Hiram stood looking broodingly at her for a long time; then at last he again spoke. "I thought a sight of you onc't, Sally," said he.

Sally did not answer immediately, but, after a while, she suddenly looked up. "Hiram," said she, "if I tell you something will you promise on your oath not to breathe a word to any living soul?" Hiram nodded. "Then I'll tell you, but if Levi finds I've told he'll murder me as sure as you're standin' there. Come nigher—I've got to whisper it." He leaned forward close to her where she sat. She looked swiftly from right to left; then raising her lips she breathed into his ear: "I'm an honest woman, Hi. I was married to Levi West before I run away."

XI

The winter had passed, spring had passed, and summer had come. Whatever Hiram had felt, he had made no sign of suffering. Nevertheless, his lumpy face had begun to look flabby, his cheeks hollow, and his loose-jointed body

shrunk more awkwardly together into its clothes. He was often awake at night, sometimes walking up and down his room until far into the small hours.

It was through such a wakeful spell as this that he entered into the greatest, the most terrible, happening of his life.

It was a sulphurously hot night in July. The air was like the breath of a furnace, and it was a hard matter to sleep with even the easiest mind and under the most favorable circumstances. The full moon shone in through the open window, laying a white square of light upon the floor, and Hiram, as he paced up and down, up and down, walked directly through it, his gaunt figure starting out at every turn into sudden brightness as he entered the straight line of misty light.

The clock in the kitchen whirred and rang out the hour of twelve, and Hiram stopped in his walk to count the strokes.

The last vibration died away into silence, and still he stood motionless, now listening with a new and sudden intentness, for, even as the clock rang the last stroke, he heard soft, heavy footsteps moving slowly and cautiously along the pathway before the house and directly below the open window. A few seconds more and he heard the creaking of rusty hinges. The mysterious visitor had entered the mill. Hiram crept softly to the window and looked out. The moon shone full on the dusty, shingled face of the old mill, not thirty steps away, and he saw that the door was standing wide open. A second or two of stillness followed, and then, as he still stood looking intently, he saw the figure of a man suddenly appear, sharp and vivid from the gaping blackness of the open doorway. Hiram could see his face as clear as day. It was Levi West, and he carried an empty meal-bag over his arm.

Levi West stood looking from right to left for a second or two, and then he took off his hat and wiped his brow with the back of his hand. Then he softly closed the door behind him and left the mill as he had come and with the same cautious step. Hiram looked down upon him as he passed close to the house and almost directly beneath. He could have touched him with his hand.

Fifty or sixty yards from the house Levi stopped and a second figure arose from the black shadow in the angle of the worm fence and joined him. They stood for a while talking together, Levi pointing now and then toward the mill. Then the two turned, and, climbing over the fence, cut across an open field and through the tall, shaggy grass toward the southeast.

Hiram straightened himself and drew a deep breath, and the moon, shining full upon his face, showed it twisted, convulsed, as it had been when he had fronted his step-brother seven months before in the kitchen. Great beads of sweat stood on his brow and he wiped them away with his sleeve. Then, coatless, hatless as he was, he swung himself out of the window, dropped upon the grass, and, without an instant of hesitation, strode off down the road in the direction that Levi West had taken.

As he climbed the fence where the two men had climbed it, he could see them in the pallid light, far away across the level, scrubby meadow land, walking toward a narrow strip of pine woods.

A little later they entered the sharp-cut shadows beneath the trees and were swallowed in the darkness.

With fixed eyes and close-shut lips, as doggedly, as inexorably as though he were a Nemesis hunting his enemy down, Hiram followed their footsteps across the stretch of moonlit open. Then, by and by, he also was in the shadow of the pines. Here not a sound broke the midnight hush. His feet made no noise upon the resinous softness of the ground below. In that dead, pulseless silence he could distinctly hear the distant voices of Levi and his companion, sounding loud and resonant in the hollow of the woods. Beyond the woods was a cornfield, and presently he heard the rattling of the harsh leaves as the two plunged into the tasseled jungle. Here, as in the woods, he followed them, step by step, guided by the noise of their progress through the canes.

Beyond the cornfield ran a road that, skirting to the south of Lewes, led across a wooden bridge to the wide salt marshes that stretched between the town and the distant sand hills. Coming out upon this road Hiram found that he

had gained upon those he followed, and that they now were not fifty paces away, and he could see that Levi's companion carried over his shoulder what looked like a bundle of tools.

He waited for a little while to let them gain their distance, and for the second time wiped his forehead with his shirt sleeve; then, without ever once letting his eyes leave them, he climbed the fence to the roadway.

For a couple of miles or more he followed the two along the white, level highway, past silent, sleeping houses, past barns, sheds and haystacks, looming big in the moonlight, past fields, and woods, and clearings, past the dark and silent skirts of the town, and so, at last, out upon the wide, misty salt marshes, which seemed to stretch away interminably through the pallid light, yet were bounded in the far distance by the long, white line of sand hills.

Across the level salt marshes he followed them, through the rank sedge and past the glassy pools in which his own inverted image stalked beneath as he stalked above; on and on, until at last they had reached a belt of scrub pines, gnarled and gray, that fringed the foot of the white sand hills.

Here Hiram kept within the black network of shadow. The two whom he followed walked more in the open, with their shadows, as black as ink, walking along in the sand beside them, and now, in the dead, breathless stillness, might be heard, dull and heavy, the distant thumping, pounding roar of the Atlantic surf, beating on the beach at the other side of the sand hills, half a mile away.

At last the two rounded the southern end of the white bluff and when Hiram, following, rounded it also, they were no longer to be seen.

Before him the sand hill rose, smooth and steep, cutting in a sharp ridge against the sky. Up this steep hill trailed the footsteps of those he followed, disappearing over the crest. Beyond the ridge lay a round, bowl-like hollow, perhaps fifty feet across and eighteen or twenty feet deep, scooped out by the eddying of the winds into an almost perfect circle. Hiram slowly, cautiously, stealthily, following their trailing line of footmarks, mounted to the top of

the hillock and peered down into the bowl beneath. The two men were sitting upon the sand, not far from the tall, skeleton-like shaft of a dead pine tree that rose, stark and gray, from the sand in which it may once have been buried, centuries ago.

XII

Levi had taken off his coat and waistcoat and was fanning himself with his hat. He was sitting upon the bag he had brought from the mill and which he had spread out upon the sand. His companion sat facing him. The moon shone full upon him and Hiram knew him instantly—he was the same burly, foreign-looking ruffian who had come with the little man to the mill that night to see Levi. He also had his hat off and was wiping his forehead and face with a red handkerchief. Beside him lay the bundle of tools he had brought—a couple of shovels, a piece of rope and a long, sharp, iron rod.

The two men were talking together, but Hiram could not understand what they said, for they spoke in the same foreign language that they had before used. But he could see his stepbrother point with his finger, now to the dead tree and now to the steep, white face of the opposite side of the bowl-like hollow.

At last, having apparently rested themselves, the conference, if conference it was, came to an end, and Levi led the way, the other following, to the dead pine tree. Here he stopped and began searching, as though for some mark; then, having found that which he looked for, he drew a tape-line and a large brass pocket compass from his pocket. He gave one end of the tape-line to his companion, holding the other with his thumb pressed upon a particular part of the tree. Taking his bearings by the compass, he gave now and then some orders to the other, who moved a little to the left or the right as he bade. At last he gave a word of command, and, thereupon, his companion drew a wooden peg from his pocket and thrust it into the sand. From this peg as a base they again measured, taking bearings by the compass, and again drove a peg. For a third time they repeated their measurements and then, at last, seemed to have reached the point which they aimed for. Here Levi

marked a cross with his heel upon the sand. His companion brought him the pointed iron rod which lay beside the shovels, and then stood watching as Levi thrust it deep into the sand, again and again, as though sounding for some object below. It was some while before he found that for which he was seeking, but at last the rod struck with a jar upon some hard object below. After making sure of success by one or two additional taps with the rod, Levi left it remaining where it stood, brushing the sand from his hands. "Now fetch the shovels, Pedro," said he, speaking for the first time in English.

The two men were busy for a long while, shoveling away the sand. The object for which they were seeking lay buried some six feet deep, and the work was heavy and laborious, the shifting sand sliding back, again and again, into the hole. But at last the blade of one of the shovels struck upon some hard substance and Levi stooped and brushed away the sand with the palm of his hand.

Levi's companion climbed out of the hole which they had dug and tossed the rope which he had brought with the shovels down to the other. Levi made it fast to some object below and then himself mounted to the level of the sand above. Pulling together, the two drew up from the hole a heavy, ironbound box, nearly three feet long and a foot wide and deep.

Levi's companion stooped and began untying the rope which had been lashed to a ring in the lid.

What next happened, happened suddenly, swiftly, terribly. Levi drew back a single step, and shot one quick, keen look to right and to left. He passed his hand rapidly behind his back, and the next moment Hiram saw the moonlight gleam upon the long, sharp, keen blade of a knife. Levi raised his arm. Then, just as the other arose from bending over the chest, he struck, and struck again, two swift, powerful blows. Hiram saw the blade drive, clean and sharp, into the back, and heard the hilt strike with a dull thud against the ribs—once, twice. The burly, black-bearded wretch gave a shrill, terrible cry and fell staggering back. Then, in an instant, with another cry, he was up and clutched Levi with a clutch of despair by the throat and by

the arm. Then followed a struggle, short, terrible, silent. Not a sound was heard but the deep, panting breath and the scuffling of feet in the sand, upon which there now poured and dabbled a dark purple stream. But it was a one-sided struggle and lasted only for a second or two. Levi wrenched his arm loose from the wounded man's grasp, tearing his shirtsleeve from the wrist to the shoulder as he did so. Again and again the cruel knife was lifted, and again and again it fell, now no longer bright, but stained with red.

Then, suddenly, all was over. Levi's companion dropped to the sand without a sound, like a bundle of rags. For a moment he lay limp and inert; then one shuddering spasm passed over him and he lay silent and still, with his face half buried in the sand.

Levi, with the knife still gripped tight in his hand, stood leaning over his victim, looking down upon his body. His shirt and hand, and even his naked arm, were stained and blotched with blood. The moon lit up his face and it was the face of a devil from hell.

At last he gave himself a shake, stooped and wiped his knife, and hand, and arm, upon the loose, petticoat breeches of the dead man. He thrust his knife back into its sheath, drew a key from his pocket and unlocked the chest. In the moonlight Hiram could see that it was filled mostly with paper and leather bags, full, apparently, of money.

All through this awful struggle and its awful ending, Hiram lay, dumb and motionless, upon the crest of the sand hill, looking with a horrid fascination upon the death struggle in the pit below. Now Hiram arose. The sand slid whispering down from the crest as he did so, but Levi was too intent in turning over the contents of the chest to notice the slight sound.

Hiram's face was ghastly pale and drawn. For one moment he opened his lips as though to speak, but no word came. So, white, silent, he stood for a few seconds, rather like a statue than a living man; then, suddenly, his eyes fell upon the bag, which Levi had brought with him, no doubt, to carry back the treasure for which he and his companion were in search, and which still lay spread out on the sand where it had been flung. Then, as though a thought

Drawn by Howard Pyle.

"He lay silent and still, with his face half buried in the sand."

had suddenly flashed upon him, his whole expression changed, his lips closed tightly together as though fearing an involuntary sound might escape, and the haggard look dissolved from his face.

Cautiously, slowly, he stepped over the edge of the sand hill and down the slanting face. His coming was as silent as death, for his feet made no noise as he sank ankle-deep in the yielding surface. So, stealthily, step by step, he descended, reached the bag, lifted it silently. Levi, still bending over the chest and searching through the papers within, was not four feet away. Hiram raised the bag in his hands. He must have made some slight rustle as he did so, for suddenly Levi half turned his head. But he was one instant too late. In a flash the bag was over his head—shoulders—arms—body.

Then came another struggle, as fierce, as silent, as desperate as that other—and as short. Wiry, tough and strong as he was, with a lean, sinewy, nervous vigor, fighting desperately for his life as he was, Levi had no chance against the ponderous strength of his stepbrother. In any case the struggle could not have lasted long; as it was, Levi stumbled backward over the body of his dead mate and fell, with Hiram upon him. Maybe he was stunned by the fall; maybe he felt the hopelessness of resistance, for he lay quite still while Hiram, kneeling upon him, drew the rope from the ring of the chest and, without uttering a word, bound it tightly around both the bag and the captive within, knotting it again and again and drawing it tight. Only once was a word spoken. "If you'll lemme go," said a muffled voice from the bag, "I'll give you five thousand pounds—it's in that there box." Hiram answered never a word but continued knotting the rope and drawing it tight.

XIII

The *Scorpion* sloop-of-war lay in Lewes Harbor all that winter and spring, probably upon the slim chance of a return of the pirates. It was about eight o'clock in the morning and Lieutenant Maynard was sitting in Squire Hall's office, fanning himself with his hat and talking in a desultory fashion. Suddenly the dim and distant noise of

a great crowd was heard from without, coming nearer and nearer. The Squire and his visitor hurried to the door. The crowd was coming down the street shouting, jostling, struggling, some on the footway, some in the roadway. Heads were at the doors and windows looking down upon them. Nearer they came, and nearer; then at last they could see that the press surrounded and accompanied one man. It was Hiram White, hatless, coatless, the sweat running down his face in streams, but stolid and silent as ever. Over his shoulder he carried a bag, tied round and round with a rope. It was not until the crowd and the man it surrounded had come quite near that the Squire and the Lieutenant saw that a pair of legs in gray yarn stockings hung from the bag. It was a man he was carrying.

Hiram had lugged his burden five miles that morning, without help and with scarcely a rest on the way. He came directly toward the Squire's office and, still surrounded and hustled by the crowd, up the steep steps to the office within. He flung his burden heavily upon the floor without a word and wiped his streaming forehead.

The Squire stood with his knuckles on his desk, staring first at Hiram and then at the strange burden he had brought. A sudden hush fell upon all, though the voices of those without sounded as loud and turbulent as ever. "What is it, Hiram?" said Squire Hall at last.

Then for the first time Hiram spoke, panting thickly. "It's a bloody murderer," said he, pointing a quivering finger at the motionless figure.

"Here, some of you!" called out the Squire, "Come! Untie this man! Who is he?" A dozen willing fingers quickly unknotted the rope and the bag was slipped from the head and body.

Hair, and face, and eyebrows and clothes were powdered with meal, but, in spite of all and through all the innocent whiteness, dark spots, and blotches and smears of blood showed upon head, and arm, and shirt. Levi raised himself upon his elbow and looked scowlingly around at the amazed, wonderstruck faces surrounding him.

"Why, it's Levi West!" croaked the Squire, at last finding his voice.

Then, suddenly, Lieutenant Maynard pushed forward, before the others crowded around the figure on the floor, and, clutching Levi by the hair, dragged his head backward so as to better see his face. "Levi West!" said he in a loud voice. "Is this the Levi West you've been telling me of? Look at that scar and the mark on his cheek! *This is Blueskin himself!*"

XIV

In the chest which Blueskin had dug up out of the sand were found not only the goldsmiths' bills taken from the packet, but also many other valuables belonging to the officers and the passengers of the unfortunate ship.

The New York agents offered Hiram a handsome reward for his efforts in recovering the lost bills, but Hiram declined it, positively and finally. "All I want," said he, in his usual dull, stolid fashion, "is to have folks know I'm honest." Nevertheless, though he did not accept what the agents of the packet offered, fate took the matter into its own hands and rewarded him not unsubstantially. Blueskin was taken to England in the *Scorpion*. But he never came to trial. While in Newgate he hanged himself to the cell window with his own stockings. The news of his end was brought to Lewes in the early autumn and Squire Hall took immediate measures to have the five hundred pounds of his father's legacy duly transferred to Hiram.

In November Hiram married the pirate's widow.

THE MILLER'S SEAL*

By Octave Thanet

Theron Dale sat upon the edge of the platform of the grist mill, watching the last grinding of the day. On his right hand, the shining steel disc hissed through the last wet log, for Rhett & Dale, "Planters & Plantation Supplies," were economical, and ground corn with the same engine that sawed logs or ginned cotton. Behind Dale, two negroes, whose black skins glistened with the heat of the work, were shoveling corn into the hopper, and a dusty white man was filling the sacks for a little group of waiting customers. It would not seem that the languid figure in white duck trousers and pink-and-white shirt had any part in the busy motion of the scene; yet, in fact, not a man there but threw an extra bit of vigor into his muscles because of the pink-and-white shirt between him and the cotton fields.

The day was closing, and already the sun was veering toward the west, flooding the mill with a sultry glow. The dust rose from the machinery and from the piles of corn on the floor, and there was a smell of meal and stale oil in the air. But along the river bank, under the shade of the great water oaks, the grass had a jeweled glow and freshness. It looked cool by the river, and it looked cool on the old-fashioned galleries of the houses scattered among the fields; and coolest of all it looked under the maple trees where the hammock was swung in the colonel's yard.

Theron knew that the drift of white skirts over one side of the hammock meant that Lee was swinging in it. He knew just how her graceful head was looking, flung back on the red pillow, the smooth, black hair a little ruffled. Lee's face always was pale—not sallow, but pale with the

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soft moonlit pallor of a pure olive skin. There would be a book in her hands, and her long black lashes would be the blacker against her white cheek. It was not a frock of pure white that she would be likely to be wearing, but a thin, white stuff, sprigged with roses; and he almost thought he could distinguish the floating ends of pink ribbon at her belt. How cool and dainty and sweet she must be looking; and the young fellow who watched her was to marry her in two months; yet his brows knitted themselves, and he crushed a sick sigh between his teeth. In fact, never, since a little, little boy, he had cried himself asleep at night because his mother was dead, and nearly broke his neck climbing to the top of the house, in the fantasy that he, from that height, might look up into heaven, where she was, had Theron been so miserable.

And one little month before, he had been so satisfied with his world and himself. Rather a small world for a brilliant Harvard man—an Arkansas plantation, heavily mortgaged and losing money every year until Theron had bought up the mortgages and put his keen eyes and clear brains into the concern. However, if a man has a crowd of doctors insisting that a hemorrhage, brought on by over-training at rowing, is a serious matter, he cannot stay in Massachusetts, no matter how enticing his prospects. There happened to be an uncle, a cotton factor, in Memphis; and he called it a good bargain when he sold the mortgages cheap to Theron, saying, truly, "Old Colonel Rhett is one of the finest gentlemen in the South, and the soul of honor, though a trifle antiquated and lavish in his methods, and the land is splendid." He added, not knowing that he was to be a true prophet, "You'll make money out of it."

Theron had made money. He had seen the possibilities of cotton hulls and fat stock; and the hole in the cotton crop during bad years was filled by cattle and hogs. The boys occasionally came down South to try his hunting; he was near enough to the railway to keep a capital wine cellar and an ice house; and, when the earth began to reek with the deadly August and September vapors, he sped away to the seashore and civilization. And every year he realized afresh how small a man he was in his own country, and

how large a figure he was growing to be in the Southwest. He brought from Harvard that gentle outward modesty and strong inward self-respect peculiar to the famous university; and each year of his success entrenched him in his own and other people's good opinion, and made it pleasanter for him to be of importance.

Whether he really looked like Colonel Rhett's only son, who died the year before he came, is not of any particular interest; the Colonel thought that he did, and his heart clave to the boy from the first. Theron was good to the old soldier, who seemed to him such an artless combination of rustic and aristocrat; and he was not aware that his goodness had any quality of condescension. The Colonel was a widower, with one child, a daughter; and Theron was glad when he began to perceive in his reveries a constant appreciation of Lee Rhett's sweetness. "Rather a sensible sort of a joke were I to fall in love with Lee," he mused. "After all, it is better to be well and strong in Arkansas than to die in Massachusetts, God bless her; and a southern wife wouldn't be always wanting to go home. What a pretty way she has of holding her head, the little witch; and what funny things she says, and how innocent she is, and sweet! And it would just serve Aunt Milly right for her tantrums if I were to get married!"

It fell out very much as he had planned. Lee accepted him, shyly; but he was not so much in love as to be blind to the signs of her affection; the Colonel rejoiced, with frank and exceeding joy; and Theron felt a placid satisfaction.

Was it only a month ago that all this was his? Why, out of his very security he had evoked regrets. He would grow pensive, of an evening, sitting on his veranda and watching the lights fade out of the gray bulk of the Colonel's house. He would wonder to himself, was he not frittering his talents and his fine education away, in a mere rural lotus-eater's paradise. His heart would contract with a mighty pang because he had no grand passion for Lee. "Idiot!" he snarled, recalling his confidence; and, in a spasm of irritable anguish, he leaned with such force on the slight railing before him that it snapped under his grip. He laughed, the kind of laugh that a man jerks out of inexpressible self-disgust.

"Finish the toll," he called to the white man; and then, bounding off the platform, he approached the little group waiting for their corn.

They looked up civilly at his approach, but with a visible embarrassment, and Pyram Gode nearly swallowed his quid of "Orphan Boy."

Old Man Rainey, who had always been a warm admirer of the young northerner, ever since they went on a bear hunt together, was the only one to speak.

"Laws! ain't it mighty hot, today?" said he; "say, Mist' Dale, anything new 'bout them postoffice robberies? We all is sorter hangin' round, waitin' on the comin' of the inspector, or whatever he names himself. My boy, jest come, says he seen him on the yon side er the creek in a buggy with—" the old farmer cleared his throat, and his faded eyes evaded Theron's unconsciously stern gaze—"with Sheriff Vassall."

Unless an almost imperceptible hardening and settling in the lines may be called a change in a face, there was no change in Theron's. His keen, dark-blue eyes did not waver, not a flicker of color crept into his fair, freckled cheeks; it was only that the half smile on his face broadened and stayed.

"Rainey, I wish you would ask Baxter to see the inspector, if he comes, and fetch him over to the Colonel's and have them told there; I'm going to ride down to the creek and meet the Colonel; and we'll both be back before sundown."

Rainey assented stolidly; but the men watched Theron walk away with curious interest. They saw him speak a few words with the men at the mill, and then, just as the whistle sounded for closing, a bay horse galloped out of Theron's yard and dashed, tail and mane streaming in the hot air, along the road to the woods.

Theron did not turn his neck, but he knew they were staring after him.

"I dare say they think I am going to light out," he thought. "Every man jack of 'em believes that I am a thief!"

He ground his teeth as he rode. "And how easy it

would be to get out of the whole infernal folly of it, if—" He looked up at the glowing sky with an expression of bewildered torture. "If I didn't know—no, by God, I *don't* know! I only have a hideous, hideous suspicion!" He rode on, at the same furious pace, with his head on his breast. He rode until he came to the ford, where he expected to meet the Colonel, who had gone that afternoon to examine some horses offered in part payment of a note. The Colonel had said he would return by the lower ford.

Arrived at the ford, Theron halted, to wait. His mood was too impatient to permit him to remain, like a statue, upon his horse. Dismounting, he tied the creature to the limb of a tree, in the southern fashion, by her bridle, thus leaving him free to pace up and down. Often had he felt the placid beauty of the scene, the great gum trees bending their rich leafage over the narrow stream, the moss-painted trunks rising out of the water, and the vista of shady road beyond, dappled with sunlight. Today he saw nothing, neither did he hear the birds trilling in the tree-tops and the soft rustle of the breeze.

"I have to think it out, and I have to tell him," he kept saying; "Oh, Lee, my little, gentle Lee, how can I?" His mare turned an inquisitive eye on him, trampling the twigs under her feet. Then she surveyed the branch to which her bridle was slung and pulled at it, in an unobtrusive way. What a miserable, humiliating, useless agony it was, he was thinking—impossible to conceive, had it not happened. When did the first of the trouble come? Wasn't it more than a month ago that the Colonel came to him? People sending registered letters through the Silverhurd postoffice complained that their money was lost.

The Colonel, being postmaster, waxed angry. Theron thought it might be some one on the cars, but the Colonel explained that their inspector ("sharpest man on the road, sir; I have a great regard for him; genial gentleman, too, and a great wag, when you get him off duty") had narrowed the circle of inquiry down to their own territory. "You see," said the Colonel, "two mail routes intersect at our office"—making an angle out of his forefingers, with much earnestness—"the two mail riders come in every

evening, and the mail stays here all night and goes out in the morning, right straight to Zoar; don't wait no time at all, you may say, at Zoar, and that is why it looks like—why, d—n it, it looks like that money was stolen *here!*"

"Why couldn't it be stolen before it gets here?"

"Because it's been stolen on both roads, sir—both roads stopping here!"

"Well, why couldn't it have been stolen in the cars after it leaves here?"

"Because, sir, there is a third route, that strikes the railway at Zoar, and not a registered letter on that route has been tampered with! That's why, sir. Theron, there's been thieving right here, right in Silverhurd; and *I* propose to find out the thief!" He took an indignant turn across the narrow office (they were in the store at the time of the discussion), then he approached Theron, with the half-wistful smile that his features often wore when he made a business proposition of any kind to the young northerner. He had grown to an appreciation of the latter's shrewdness, and he was divided between a craving to win this uncommonly keen young man's approbation and a fear of his ridicule. Theron found his humility more amusing than pathetic, but of late it did not amuse him. "Yes?" said Theron.

"I've—I've sent for a lot of detective stories by a man named Doyle, and I'm studying them up—showing how to work up a case, you know. What do you think of it?"

Theron did not deny himself a laugh, and he fancied that the Colonel looked wounded, although he was good-natured and protested that, anyhow, the time wasn't lost, for they were capital stories.

But after that he had said little, and Theron let him putter with clues, unmolested. It seemed to him that, of all possible detectives, the Colonel, who could only be kept by main force from going on the bonds of all his old army friends and giving credit at the plantation store to every miserable renter who had sickness and a large family, and who trusted every tale of woe that he met on the streets when he went to St. Louis, was the least likely to run a clever rascal to earth. And clever, Theron admitted the

rascal to be. Ever since the first rumor of loss, the two partners had allowed no one except themselves to touch the mail. The mail-bag was locked at night and placed within a locked desk, either Theron or the Colonel keeping the key. The one clue that they seemed to have (though the Colonel made much more of it than Theron, thanks to his reading), was that, during comparatively careless days when the key had been kept in the desk used for the letters, it had been lost all day and finally found in a place where the clerk who found it swore he had searched before. But in vain did Theron shadow the mail boy and the two clerks. His shadows, he suspected, took their mission in ill part and reported nothing. Lately, in addition to bolts and bars, a mastiff of approved fidelity and a spry and vigilant little rat terrier had guarded the store. Yet, a week or so after this combination of vigilance and strength had been locked up nightly, Pyram Gode sidled up to the counter and reported the loss of a registered letter. Pyram was a sallow, complaining man, to whom the Colonel never gave credit since he had turned informer on a whisky peddler. He did not trade at the store, but he came there for his mail. " 'Tain't the letter, reely," he explained, "that's ben lost; it's the money in it. I put in a five-dollar bill. Colonel seen me, and he registered the letter himself."

Theron, who had listened with an unusual grimness to his plaint, told him curtly that he would report it to the Colonel. He did not expect the Colonel to grin savagely. "Do you reckon he put any money in the letter?" growled he, under his white mustache. "They said he had something to do with the train robbers. He's just the kind of white-livered, plausible feller likely to do such a thing!"

"For God's sake, don't let us suspect people without good reason, sir!" Theron cried, with most unusual agitation.

"Well, never mind," said the Colonel, staring a little, "I have a clue. You needn't be afraid I shall do anything hastily—no, sir!"

But, as the Colonel had done things hastily and no otherwise all his life, Theron was not relieved. He went away, because he, who prided himself on his composure, his

man-of-the-world's steadiness, could not keep the muscles of his mouth from quivering, for he was sure it was not Gode.

He had become interested and anxious, and, seeing, with some amusement, that the Colonel was making his own researches, he determined to turn detective on his own account. "The dear old fellow is trying to astonish me with his successes," he said to himself, shrugging his shoulders. "I shall have to try to prevent his astonishing me with an awful break somewhere." So, many a night, secretly, had he entered the store and slept, as well as he could, on a rug spread over an unused mattress in a room downstairs. He did not go every night, but every night on his return from the Colonel's he used to walk around the store. Only once did he ever discover anything. That once changed his whole outlook on life.

It was the very night that, according to the register, Gode's letter must have been posted. Theron had spent a happy evening at the Colonel's. Lee had been gentler and sweeter than usual, and her father had laughingly forced her to exhibit certain dainty feminine bits of finery that she had been making, to her lover. "My little girl will have as pretty frocks as any of them," said he, proudly, "if she does spend so little money. I often offer her money, and she won't take it; says I must save it to build the new store."

"Oh, summer things don't cost much money," said Lee, laughing and rumpling her father's silver hair; "one can be right fine on one's fingers and fifty cents."

Then she had kissed her father, with an adorable blush, and Theron had assured himself that, by Jove, he really was genuinely in love, at last. "How pastoral, how innocent, it all is!" he exclaimed, as he walked home in the starlight. "All the detestable fever of our modern life isn't in it, here. I shall write Nell (Nell was his sister) that Lee is worth all the girls in Boston!"

He went home, singing:

"Her eyes are stars of morning,
Her lips are crimson flowers;
Goodnight, goodnight, beloved,
While I watch the weary hours!"

He wrote the letter to his sister, and then another to a college friend, and then, feeling too pleasantly excited for sleep, it occurred to him to go to the store. "Wouldn't it be a joke if I nabbed the fellow tonight," thought he. When he came within sight of the east wall of the store, which obliquely turns to the river and is approached first, his pulses gave a tingling bound. No, it was not imagination; there was a crack of light in one corner of the window. It was not wider than a knife edge, and, while his eyes strained after it, it wavered and disappeared. But he kept on his course. Presently, he could discover another streak. Whatever was hung before the window did not entirely exclude the light. Light is the most persistent and evasive thing in the natural world; it may be in the spiritual, also. So Theron thought, fantastically, as he stole on this betraying gleam, with the footfall of an Indian. In fact, he had pulled off his shoes. Noiselessly, he took one of the empty packing boxes always near the store, carried it to the window, climbed on it and fastened his eye to the crack. The shawl—the screen was a shawl; he could see the fringe —fluttered the least crevice to one side; he could look into the post-office. He saw a portion of the desk. He saw letters strewn about, and a segment of the open mail bag, and a small alcohol lamp, making a blue, uncanny blaze, alongside a single candle. A cup of water was steaming above the blue flames. Some one sat on the high stool before the desk, lifting each letter, fingering it, at last selecting one and holding the flap over the steam of the lamp. The some one was Lee! In nightmares, sometimes, the heart is shaken by a picture focused on a few details, cruelly sharp, the rest a horror and a mystery of darkness. So it was now with him. He saw his love's pure, pale profile, rimmed in light; the light seemed to shine through the envelope, through the delicate fingers that lifted the flap and pulled the bank note; but the rest was black. Did he feel dizzy and thus lose his footing, or did the insecure box give way? The light went out, and he ran, noiselessly, swiftly, around the corner of the building. He thought that she must have gone to the window and raised it, ever so cautiously, for he heard a muffled creaking. She had

extinguished the light. He panted a minute, beneath the shelter of the steps; but all was still; and, directly, he ran down to the river, and so on, covered by the high banks, until he gained the fields behind his own house, and at last crawled into his own door. No sooner was he home, with a little breath back in his body, than he cursed himself for a fool, that he had not boldly called to Lee and demanded an explanation. At least, he would know the worst; but now—now, his brain burned itself out in miserable questions, accusations, denials, ravings. Why was she there, while her father slept, opening letters?

She came down to the store, in the morning, to buy a "very large, nice dishpan." She looked as fresh and happy, in her blue and white gingham, with her broad hat with the white veil, and her crisp white apron, as if she had stepped out of Arcadia. She blushed happily at his gaze. "Such a d——d undignified tragedy!" groaned Theron to himself, while she discussed the merits of dishpans.

He had a rush of relief at the thought that he must go that day to Memphis on business and be absent for several days. Perhaps when he came back this nightmare would have dissolved itself.

He did not know how he could ever get through the parting without betraying himself; but when the parting came, he kissed Lee with a novel and passionate tenderness.

All the time that he was at Memphis, he was consumed by a longing to get back, only to see her, only to watch her every look and word, and tear out the squalid secret of this mystery. Never, when he had believed implicitly in Lee, had her image pursued him with such a haunting charm. Never had her gayety seemed to him so bright, her unselfishness so lovely, her simplicity so exquisite. "There must be some reason for it," he would plead, answering the sick recoil of his reason and his pride when he remembered; "women are so queer in their notions; but, oh, if I could only wake up and find it all a dream, and my little Lee, just as I thought her, back again!" How strong his hopes were, despite their unreason, he realized by the shock he felt when Gode spoke to him.

During the next two days, Theron was like a man in a

sleep. He became aware of the course of the public suspicion; but it only added an irritating pin-prick to the pain and fear that was tearing his soul. This very day, he had been in a tumult. While he had been watching the grinding, a boy had handed him a note from the Colonel. "Money traced. Am going to see about it before I come home." Only two sentences, but enough to take the pith out of Theron's knees. Then came the news of the inspector's and sheriff's coming, and Theron's irresolution went off in a flash of fear. He had never been so irresolute before. For that matter, he could not recall ever having been irresolute before, in any degree. He had looked at the different courses of action open to him, and chosen what seemed to him the best; and, once chosen, had flung himself into the movement with all the real ardor of his nature. "Now, I am a nerveless, bewildered, cowardly cur," he ground between his teeth; "I *will* know what is the truth, and I'll save her, if I have to run away and be chased for it myself."

He turned, in a glow of determination, at last. But he did not move. At least, he did not move for a second, and the reason was simple. The mare had made the best of his abstraction. She had pulled her bridle free of the tree, and was grazing, unfettered, at a little distance. At the sound of Theron's voice, she reared her head and gave him a glance of that wicked intelligence to be noticed in animals' faces when they regard themselves as at a safe distance. "Nannie!" called Theron, in tones of silken wooing, with fury in his heart, "Nannie, girl! Here, girl!"

Nannie girl tossed her mane, cut a frolicsome caper with her heels, and then gave Theron a clean view of them, as she galloped off home.

There remained nothing for her master to do but wait for the Colonel. "If he comes this way, as he said, it will be all right," said Theron, "but if he changes his mind and takes the other ford?"

The impetus of this disagreeable idea sent Theron up a tree, from which, over a rank tangle of low undergrowth and swamp, he could survey the other ford, two miles lower down. And there, ambling along beside a buggy, rode the Colonel. Theron knew the slight figure of the inspector,

Platt, and the sheriff's broad shoulders and gray horse. While Theron gazed, his wits congealing at the sight, the buggy turned off into a side road, and the Colonel jogged on alone.

"I may catch him yet, before they join him again," thought Theron, "and find out what they have done and let him see the danger." He slipped down the tree and ran along the road to a cross cut, a mere bridle path, by which he might intercept the Colonel before he came out, just in front of his own home. At college he had been a marvelous runner. He was out of trim now, and he felt it in ten minutes, but he kept on, gradually increasing his pace. On and on he sped, through the woods. The blood pumped a roar in his ears, he felt suffocated, but he knew if he opened his mouth it would be all over with him. On and on he ran, until he reached the road.

The Colonel must have increased his speed, for he was only a speck in the distance, almost at his own gate. Theron shut his teeth and ran on to the village, to the Colonel's house.

A miserable object, ready to drop with fatigue, he was hailed by the inspector, "Say, what's up?"

The Colonel, the inspector and Lee sat on the veranda. They were all smiling, but Lee rose and the smile changed into a look of alarm at his purple face, with the wet hair dragged over the forehead.

Theron sat down, physically unable to walk. He tried to invent some pretext out of his plight to get the Colonel off alone with him. "Horse ran off, and I ran after her," he answered. Then he had to stop to catch his breath before he begged the Colonel to go with him. And, in the pause, the inspector said, "Oh, your horse is all right; I saw her in your yard. And I've some good news for you; we've got the post-office thief!"

"No!" said Theron—he must say something.

"Yes, sir," said the inspector, "and I must make my compliments to the Colonel, and to Miss Rhett, too"—he bowed in Lee's direction—"on a mighty pretty piece of detective work."

"You'll have to explain," said Theron.

The Colonel rubbed his hands, and the inspector handed him the word, as one who could explain better than he.

"It was this way," said the Colonel. "We differed a little about the way to go to work, you remember—when the books came, you understand; so I thought I wouldn't trouble you with my theories."

Theron, who was wiping his damp face, fast growing pale, nodded; he remembered.

"I used to talk things over with Lee, and that was all. You suggested our sending a letter to the different post-offices, and having them, when money was registered, take down the numbers and banks of the bills. The post-offices 'round here, being in stores, generally can see the money without trouble, and we handle most of the money sent from here; they *get* it from us, you understand. Well, we got pretty excited over these robberies. Mr. Dale"—here he beamed on Theron, who sat dazed, mopping his brow—"Mr. Dale had his notion of finding the thief. He was for watching the mail-rider and watching the clerks; and finally he took to sleeping at the store, on the sly"—again a radiant smile at Theron—"and don't you reckon the fool folks about here saw him sneaking over there in the dark, and Lord knows what notions they had, but they came to me." The Colonel laughed, but Lee flushed. "He had reason to suspect me," Theron thought, "and it never entered his honest, trusting head!"

"Yes, sir," continued the Colonel, after a refreshing gulp from a tumbler that looked like a mint bed, "yes, sir, we went to work different ways. I was onto The's game, but he wasn't onto the old man's; and I 'lowed I would give him a surprise—show him they don't keep all the smartness locked up down East. Well, Lee and I went over the books, and we figured it that the way Mr. Holmes made out was to study the situation and then to see what theory would fit *all* the facts. We narrowed the business down until we were pretty sure that it was done here, and done right in our store. Then we put the dogs in, to see if the thief was a stranger or somebody they knew. I had made out a list of the people who lost money, and I had made out a list of the fellers round here mean enough to do such a trick, and

a mighty small list it was, with one man at the head and the same man at the foot."

"Yes," said the inspector, "name of—"

"Pyram Gode, a fellow that bought whisky of a poor devil and then informed on him—a mean, triflin' feller, five miles down the river, living alone and liable to take a boat and scud up here at night. Pyram was in the store the day we lost the key. There's another point against him. Well, I put the key business in your hand, and I kept a lookout for the money, and so did you, but nothing definite turned up until, day ayfter we had those dogs at the store, Pyram comes in and asks for change for a ten-dollar bill—wants to send five dollars to a firm in St. Louis. So I went to the safe and had the clerk bring him out two five-dollar bills, first having him jot down the money. I didn't do it, because my hands were all greasy, coming over from the mill, where I had been fixing the engine. But then a sudden thought struck me. I took the bills in my smeared hand and gave them to Gode. And I saw him put the top one—which had my thumb mark on it, plain—into his envelope. But, instead of giving me the envelope directly, he put it in his pocket while he asked were the robberies over, and then, seeming reassured, he took it out and handed it to me. I took it; and I took it in such a way that my thumb went right over the flap, and there was a seal, as it were, in machine oil. You see I had a notion. Do you know what gave me the notion? That ten-dollar bill Gode gave us was one of the stolen bills. Found the number when I was looking at the list to put in the numbers of the fives. And before I went home to Lee, I did something else. I wrote to the firm that Gode's letter was addressed to, and asked them, explaining why, to please open the letter so as not to disturb the flap, and to kindly send back the envelope to me if the money was gone. And then I took the other two registered letters that we were sending that day and put my miller's seal on *their* flaps, and wrote the same kind of a note to their consignees. They were both from Lee, and contained money for little articles of dry-goods she was purchasing. Daughter, a little more of the julep, please, and give Theron another cup; I see he can't make head or tail out of this story yet."

"I haven't heard the details either, you know," said the inspector, "I think—thank you, Miss Rhett."

"Well," the Colonel continued, evidently enjoying his own periods, "well, I told Lee what I had done. I says, says I, if that rascal is the thief, what he is after now is to show that the robberies went on, regardless of the dogs, so he has posted a letter supposed to contain money, but really not containing a cent. That's why he put the bill in, and that's why he put the letter into his pocket. If you read those books, they put you onto all such little games. *He had another letter, just the same as the first, but without any bill in it!* And he substituted that for the letter with the bill in it, keeping the latter. You got that clear? All right. My theory was to mark the envelope, that if it was opened, it would show it, and if it was *not* opened, then it would show that he had deliberately posted an empty letter, instead of the letter containing money. That is, if it was as I suspected. I marked Lee's letters, to see if they would be tampered with, which I didn't think, for I was plumb sure the dogs would give Pyram a job if he tried to come in. I told all this to Lee, after Theron, who spent the evening, had gone home. Lee wasn't so sure that the envelope couldn't be opened, and she suggested that we take a little alcohol lamp, and go down to the store, and take out her letters and steam them a bit, to see whether the impression would be disturbed and the flap not fit. And that's just what we did."

"Excuse me!" cried Theron. He had knocked over his mint julep glass.

"We did just that very thing," said the Colonel—"stole by night, as if we had been the thief himself, and, as Lee suggested, tried to repeat his performance exactly, as far as her letters were concerned; and we discovered that I was right, and that the envelope couldn't be fitted back exactly —at least, without an immense amount of time and trouble. And, being out prospecting, we examined the windows, and found one with a broken catch, that looked all right, but had, no doubt, been used for his entrances; though, I confess, our southern windows aren't, any of them, burglar-proof. Then the plot thickened. Gode had the idiocy to

spend at this store the very five dollar bill with my mark on it; yes, sir! Then he got word from St. Louis, and complained, and brought the letter from the St. Louis folks—oh, he had it all fixed slick; and that's what caught him, for the envelope came back to me untouched. There it is" —handing a sealed envelope to Theron, who took it mechanically, and staggered as he returned to his seat. "Mr. Platt, here, about the same time, found the locksmiths who made a key for a man whose appearance corresponded with Pyram's; and we got track of the money, too; and the end is, Mr. Platt came down, and now the sheriff is interviewing Mr. Pyram Gode. And what do you say to it all, my son?"

He laid a brown hand on Theron's shoulder, and the inspector laughed.

Theron managed to get on his feet, and make a bow.

"I say," said he, "that Sherlock Holmes isn't a patch on you, sir, as a detective, and that *I* am the most contemptible chump I know!"

He excused himself presently, to go home and make himself presentable for a little late supper that he insisted on giving; and there was a jolly evening of it; but Nannie was the most astonished horse in Arkansas, for her master flung his arms about her and kissed her and cried like a baby, while such broken exclamations as these were sobbed into her marveling ears: "Oh, you blessed brute! Oh, what a narrow squeak! Oh, what an angel she is! Oh, what a d—d fool I am! Oh, thank the Lord! Such an ass as I was didn't deserve to be saved!"

Nevertheless, he was; and he has been so grateful ever since that the Colonel's wistful smile seldom has occasion to appear.

THE BLUE-CORN WITCH*

By Charles F. Lummis

Nothing in this level and four-cornered world is more unlikely than that Juana and Reyes had ever heard of the parable, "Two women shall be grinding at a mill; the one shall be taken and the other left." They did not even know that their mill was in the very similitude of the mills at which the women of Samaria were bending to grind even as the Voice spoke, almost nineteen centuries ago. And it is just as well; for nothing is more uncomfortable than to know more than our share. The more we learn, the more we worry; and worry shall be the last stranger to discover the Children of the Sun, who dwell in the exact center of this terrestrial plane and borrow no trouble from abroad. Sufficient unto the day is the good thereof.

So where they were gathered, tonight, in the long, low room, forethought had come with them, but not care. Outside, a New Mexican sandstorm howled through the alleys of the pueblo, and the accursed coyote howled along the hills with his immortal toothache; but here the juniper crackled heartily in the corner fireplace, and candles in wonderful tin-can sconces conspired with it to send the shadows vagarying from walls snowy with gypsum to vigas almost black with age, and back again. Near the great white hood of the kitchen hearth, which filled an end of the room, were the metates, the competent mealing-stones on which simple peoples have milled their corn meal and whole-wheat flour since before the day of Abraham. Here knelt Reyes and Juana, swaying rhythmically forward and back, forward and back, the long, slender mano slabs of lava in their hands sliding with a contented rumble up and down the sloping tablet of lava set in its cemented trough, their

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clear, high voices rising in unison with the sonorous chant of the men who sat along the wall, keeping time with their stone hammers as they tap, tap, tappity-tapped upon the rawhide on an anvil stone upon their knees, taming it for the soles of new moccasins. How elemental rhythm is, we, who hire our music, little realize. The sense of it is endemic among less sophisticated peoples. Now Juana swept a new supply of the kernels of blue corn up the slanting face of her nether millstone, or Reyes scooped the pale-blue meal into a vacant compartment of the trough, or 'Lipe shifted his rawhide and began scraping off the hair with a sharp-edged bit of obsidian; but never was the cadence broken by a shade. No orchestra could have kept more perfect time than this patriarchal concert of unstudied voices and purring millstones driven by hand, and stone hammers beating to the very measure of the ceremonial tombé.

"Hí-mé eé-ru, hi-me nwé-ba!
Isn't it pretty? Truly, isn't it?
All around us, on every side,
The Trues, who command the rain.
Do you not hear their drum? (the thunder)
It means this year you shall see
The vapor over us floating.
It means that you shall see
This year the drizzling rain.
In all the fields the corn upspringing,
Like the young pine coming up,
Like the green aspen a-tremble.
Isn't it pretty? Isn't it, truly?"

As the song ended, Juana picked between a critical thumb and forefinger a pinch of her meal. "Ta?" she asked of wrinkled Reyes; and Reyes answered "Ah." For with folk who have none of our advanced fear that we might lose our speech if we allowed it to pause for breath, these two monosyllables are quite enough to say, "Is that sufficiently ground, in your opinion?" and to answer, "Why, yes, I should say so."

Juana reached behind her and drew to the side of the mealing-trough a big, red earthen cajete, a bowl two feet across, into which she shifted her grist, cleaning the last particle from the metate with a wisp of broom corn. To the dry heap, which for fineness was halfway between our

corn meal and process flour, she added water from the gay-painted tinaja and a little salt, and stirred it to a thick, green-blue mush. By its looks only, and without the sweet, unmistakable fragrance, no housewife of ours would ever have guessed what the mixture was—the meal of the prehistoric blue corn, which is not only of superior ceremonial sanctity among the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico, but has, in fact, a good American flavor of its own beyond the fatter ears of cereal parvenus.

Evidently, matters were in procession, even with the People Who Do Not Hurry, for the grist got no respite between mill and oven. On the kitchen hearth a slow, hot fire was burning under the comal, a soapstone slab two feet long and a foot and a half wide, mounted on stone trunnions about eight inches high. It was the first griddle that man invented, and to this day the most esoteric. Reyes's own hair was iron gray; but now she went over and wakened a crone who dozed by the fogon; a crone whose head was as white as the head of Mount San Mateo, and her wrinkles more numerous than the volcano's. For in these degenerate days only the great-grandmothers can make guayaves without burning their fingers; and if you would tease a younger woman, the quickest way is to ask her if she can make the wasps'-nest bread. Ancient dames, no longer considerable as women, find a chilly comfort in moralizing on the decay of housewifery, and patronizing the spoiled young things who are afraid to trust their palms on a comal.

Nana 'Chona was in her nineties; another wrinkle could have got foothold only by dispossessing a predecessor, and one would as soon speak of expression in a nutmeg as on her sleeping face. But at whatever Reyes said, the old parchment became animate, as it were a palimpsest with a bright new ink flaming across the dim lines of lost centuries. With something of command in her carriage she tottered down the room to the great hood, squatted at the hearth, drew the bowl of batter to her right side, and shook it experimentally. The consistency evidently gave no call to the criticism one could fancy near the tip of her tongue; and a swift but indescribably knowing test of the comal with a wet forefinger showed her that the temperature of

the griddle was equally above reproach. Settling back on her haunches, no longer a crone but masterful in every line of that ancient back, 'Chona dipped a swift hand in the batter and swept her palm flat and leisurely the length of the comal on the far side, and to the start again, and back, and twice more, until the blue film from her hand covered the entire stone. A grateful steam came stealing down the room. The batter was cooked in the selfsame instant of contact, and already blistered up, here and there, thin and dry as tissue paper. In half the time I have taken for the telling of one film, she had bestowed two, and was dipping her hand for a third, working steadily, unhurriedly, assuredly as a steam engine. What a simple thing happiness is, after all! It is simply in being able to do something better than some others do it; our common modern blunder is in thinking that it consists in sitting still and feeling better than some others.

When ten or a dozen layers, one upon another's back, had taken their due place, the old woman deftly whipped the whole baking from the griddle—even that, simple as it looks, is beyond the skill of the new generation—and laid it on a clean board her humbled issue had provided. The left hand made the transfer, for the right hand was already sweeping a new film the length of the comal. There is always a fascination in watching competent hands, of smith, or carpenter, or swordsman, or magician; but one will go far and high in any of these crafts before one finds anything more adept, less flurried, less faltering, less wasteful than the hand of the graduate guayave-maker.

Far and faint for her old ears were the tap-tap of the moccasin-makers and the rumble of a mill in another key; for now Juana was rubbing jerked mutton into fibrous fineness between slabs of coarser lava. Even the songs which broke out every now and then, and enlisted all fingers as well as all voices to their rhythm, did not seem to rouse the old expert at the griddle. Only when some imp of mischief prompted Faustin, who was young and fearless and not too long married, to strike up the "Song of the Bachelors," a flippant lay, indeed, with its reference to the thin queues and bent backs of Age, 'Chona suddenly turned on the room.

"Tú-pid!" she shrilled. "Be still! For you see only the cowskin under your noses. 'What are the Hlú-hlin good for?' To see, childen! To see! When the eyes are as a salt ciénega, wet but of no worth, then at last we use them. Do you know what I see now? I see three burros coming alone to the mésas of the Hopi, and he who should drive them, I see him fallen by the trail away back by the Tinajones. Can you see that, you whose backs are so straight?"

For a moment there was a hush in the room, then Faustin smiled indulgently. One does not laugh aloud at the aged, among the Children of the Sun.

"Indá-a, Nana 'Chona," he answered, more soberly, "we cannot see that. For last night I carried the Praying Smoke to the Father of All Medicine, and besought him; and this very night he came with the other Hoó-ma-kun to the house of Remígio, and looked in the sacred mirror, and saw it would be well, and gave us the road. How, then? Is there any one who can see so well as the Fathers of All Medicine? Nay, Nana, not even you. The ghosts have sent you a bad vision tonight. The journey will go well to me, for so the Hoó-ma-kun have said."

"Oú-te, your ghosts! Do you think I keep woodpecker's feathers to call them? The Fathers of Medicine did not see all; it may be their smoke was not good; for I know thy burros, do I not? and Moqui? And I see them there, Cojo a little ahead, and I see you lying by the little Tinajon, by the lone savino that grows in the crack in the rock."

"Quiete, bruja!" growled Sanchez, turning angrily in his seat at the farther end of the bench. He was a Sonoran, drifted over from Arizona, who had hung about the pueblo since last year, gambling whenever a victim offered, eating wherever he could squeeze by tolerance, and by some means not known "standing off" the alguazils when they came around every Saturday to warn all strangers to begone. He had struck up a one-sided friendship with Faustin, doing services, accepting rebuffs, and winning, finally, the status of tolerance during usefulness. Now he was to be particularly useful; for he had agreed to accompany Faustin to Moqui, where he knew many of the people and a little of the tongue. So he could help a good deal in the barter

for the blue-black mantas; and there must be mantas, of course, since no Pueblo woman would think of wearing any other kind of dress, and only the Moquis make them. And as he was to be so important a member of Faustin's trading trip, it evidently ruffled him to have this old crone throw out so grim a forecast.

But at such unheard-of language to his great-grandmother, even easy-going Faustin kindled. "What do you say, you wet-head?" (so the Indians call Mexicans, in allusion to their baptism) he cried. "Is it so one talks to the Olds? For a so-little I would teach you what my Nana's great-grandson has hands for, and how many!"

"No, nothing," said Sanchez humbly. "I did ill, being without thought. It is evident that Doña 'Chona is no witch, or she would know that the road will go well to you, as the medicine men have said. If they had not found the omens good, I would not go myself."

"And if you did not—" cried the crone; but then her age seemed suddenly come back upon her, and she sank down against the wall, mumbling unintelligibly.

At three of the morning the traders were away. In front plodded Cojo and Flojo and Paloma, in single file, each packed high and cinched tight; and Faustin and Sanchez trudged side by side behind. Up the long sand-hill, and over the black shoulder of the Kú-mai, the watchers at Simón's gate saw them dwindle by the waning moon. And so Faustin Carpio walked away from this good-enough world, and into the shadows. It has always been some comfort to remember that he went provisioned, even for the four dark days' journey to a country where the medicine men never miscalculate. Even if the ghosts found his trail (since there were no shamans in time to blind it with false tracks to fool the devils), perhaps he could buy off the fiends; for it is generally admitted that in all her ninety-odd years, 'Chona never made better guayaves than those she griddled for her great-grandson on his last journey; crisp and sweet and flaky; for all the world, in color and texture, like sheets of wasps'-nest, but toothsome as any cake that ever knew corn.

'Chona was right. Seventeen days later, Juan Rey

returned troubled from his Moqui bartering; and in front of him plodded Faustin's three burros with his own three; and upon one of them was cinched something bolster-shaped, rolled in a Navajo blanket, to be added to the relinquished clay that crumbles in the consecrated ground of Shee-e-huíb-bac. Coming down the mésa on whose lofty summit the Hopi have built their immemorial town, Juan Rey had met three burros, empty, even their pack-saddles gone, and knew them for his compadre Faustin's. Trailing them back, at the Tinajones he had found Faustin, a little stain on his drawn-work shirt-front, and under it, blue and pouting, the lips of a tiny cut. North of the pot-holes he had found tracks of two horses and two men, one in Navajo moccasins and one in delicate boots such as they make in Chihuahua at twenty dollars the pair. They were the same boots whose print he found all the way back to Shee-e-huíb-bac, side by side with Faustin's honest teguas.

Juan Rey's news set the pueblo by the ears. The captain of war, and the cacique, and the governor, and the Fathers of Medicine, and the sheriffs all came to the stricken house, and asked what could be learned, and did what could be done for the safety of the spirit which might still be in the clutches of the ghosts. Juana and Reyes, with soot upon their faces, rocked to and fro in their corners, and wailed bitterly, unmindful of them that came to comfort, who were many, for all thought well of Faustin. He was as kind as he was strong, and a little mischievous. No one could break a wild horse better; and as for the cacique's foot races, why, until Faustin married Juana, the bachelors almost always won that all-day relay-race; and after that, the married men had beaten; for the tall young benedict was still the swiftest on either side.

There was gloom on the whole quiet town for the mysterious tragedy. Doubtless it would have stopped at gloom, but that the tongue was given us as a punishment. Juana dearly loved her husband's great-grandmother, so dearly that when amid their grief the old crone crouched stupid and unresponsive, now muttering what no one could make out, now laughing vacantly, Juana was not irritated. She understood that 'Chona's mind had gone away. It was in

perfect innocence that she told the consolers how Nana 'Chona had known it beforehand, better than the Hoó-ma-kun, and had warned Faustin.

"But how?" demanded the Father of All Medicine, when this strange fact was promptly reported to him by one of the comforters. "How knew she what was hidden from us who gave him the road? There will be black magic here; for the smoke showed it would be well, and the horse-hairs gave good omens, and who could see more, unless by help of the Left-Hand Spirits? We will see about this."

And they did. All who had been present at the fateful guayave-making were haled before the Fathers of Medicine, and inquisitioned gravely. Juana and Reyes related all that had been said and done, with the literal memory of those who have no books. Old 'Chona said nothing to the point. When they questioned her she mumbled toothless words; and when the witnesses had been dismissed, and the chief shaman breathed smoke from his ceremonial cigarette across the waters of the sacred cajete, and peered into that enchanted mirror to see what every one in the world was doing, he most assuredly saw 'Chona harboring a feather of the devilish woodpecker, or he never would have said he did, and called the Cum-pa-huít-la-huen, each with his bow-case and quiver of the hide of the mountain lion, and given them his bidding, whereat they departed running.

It is no joke, among Indians, to be suspected of being a witch. We can be condescendingly sorry for people so superstitious as to believe in these things with all the fierce credulity of fear; for our godly and revered Puritan ancestors, who hanged witches, are all dead, and we ourselves do not hang much of any one for much of anything. It is one of the most soothing things in a world which needs all the emollients that can be found for it, that we can always be proud of our ancestors and sorry for strangers. Strangers are always more or less superstitious.

Living so many years among these simple people, I have ceased to smile at an accusation of witchcraft. It is a matter of life and death. Even as among my several-times-great-grandfather's people in Massachusetts, or as the whisper, "He's a spy," in the heat of war, the suggestion of

witchcraft in any Indian population I know between here and Chile is like a prairie fire; you know it is going to burn, but no man can tell where it will stop. I have myself seen villages decimated by this secret feud; dear personal friends of mine have been executed as witches, in Mexico, Central America, South America; aye, and in our proud United States! And I have the ceremonial arrow, with an agate tip, which I pulled out through the ribs of a neighbor whom we found in the morning, shot through and through from left side to right side, for having had dealings with the ghosts. No dawdling bowmen are these Cum-pa-huít-la-huen, or official witch-killers. And for my photography and other uncanny practices I have been accused of being a shahua, and had a very close call from the offices of the Lionskin Archers.

When a tap came that midnight at the door of the house under the cottonwood, the two who had not slept before since the return of Juan Rey were heavy with slumber; and it was the mumbling old woman with an empty mind who answered, "Pán-yu?" (Who is it?)

"Nah," (It is I), came a false voice.

The crone tottered to the door, unmindful. What to her that she had no idea who "Nah" was? Mechanically she unhasped the old wrought fastening, and was swinging the rude door, when a hand flung her aside. Reyes asleep was more awake than her grandmother waking, and through the deep coverlets of weariness and grief the scent of danger had struck to her woman intuition. Without a yawn or a stretch she leaped from deep sleep to the crisis, as the wild beasts do, as man was meant to do, and did, before he became too atrophied with modern conveniences for escaping responsibility.

As old 'Chona, swept back by that matronly arm, collapsed upon the floor, the door swung wide from her pull, and there was a deep twang, a whisper of the flying reed, and an agate point drank the breast where Faustin drank, years ago; and bit through the heart that was heavy for Faustin. "Ay Dios in-ká-we!" she sighed, no louder than one would say "Good-morrow," and was dead. One of the millers had been taken.

Suspicion, consternation, confusion were in the morning's town gossip. Why had Reyes been executed? for the ceremonial arrow means law, not murder, since Winchesters are in vogue and the ancient arco y flecha remain solely for ritual uses. Who had accused her of being a bruja? No one knew. No one could guess. The mystery burned, as mysteries do among the unsophisticated, and the pueblo was in a ferment until the alguazils marched solemnly down to the house and marched old 'Chona off between them to the rude adobe jail.

"Clear that she is a witch," the Father of All Medicine had said to them, and the word soon spread through the pueblo. "But a powerful one. It needs care. Put her in the sepo, until we can see who is stronger, the Left-Hand Spirits or the Trues. And—m—m—you may put her upon the little horse."

So Juana was left alone, as much as any woman can be alone who hopes,—making sacrifice to the Trues that it should be a man-child, to renew its father's name on earth; and Nana 'Chona sat unheeding on the caballito of A-shaped timber, mumbling still and never crying out as they do who remember their tortured body. "Eat, Nana," said the sheriffs who brought her food, respectfully; for though convicted by the supreme court of the most hideous sin to them conceivable, she was a woman, and old. But she answered not a word. Nor did she seem to hear them, for she went on with her vague mutterings and saw no one, not even sleep and hunger and pain when they met her. So the last doubt of her witchcraft fled. Who but a witch could so endure? Beyond a peradventure, the Fathers of Medicine would make an example of her.

On the fourth day, Juana came to the funny little window of the jail. It is of six wooden bars, which any reasonable man could wrench out with a twist of the wrist, as the walls are of adobe, which the mice bore through. But it suffices in a degraded society wherein even criminals respect the law, and do not think to break jail. Like any other true believer, Juana revered the law before her very blood; but now formless little feet and hands beat at the walls of her, and for their sake she was able to face not trivial things

like lions, but the very wrath of the Trues; and Juana had been thinking.

"Nana 'Chona!" she cried through the ridiculous grating. No answer.

"Nana 'Chona! Yu-a Faustin?" No answer.

And then suddenly she caught, amid the shapeless mumbling of the crone, "Whetting his knife on the very comal!"

A swift light broke on Juana. "Of a truth! Was I not scolding Sanchez for scratching the griddle-stone? And Nana 'Chona saw it. For that she knew, knowing also that coyote, as I did. Now I see! It was not the ghosts but the Trues that showed her."

We who are smart understand, but do not; the primitive do when they understand. The cacique was adjusting thorns in himself, where they would be most effective in atoning for the sins of the pueblo, and solacing himself after tolerant ideas of solace, with the cigarette of tobacco rammed into a hollow reed which some one had brought him as a sacrificial offering, when a panel of his weathered door split with the impulse some caller gave it, not even stopping to knock. And when this old man, who hid behind one of the homeliest faces in the world one of the goldenest hearts, had heard Juana's breathless story, and smoked the cigarette even she was not too flurried to bring for fee, he rose gravely and gave her his word to the Hoó-ma-Ku-íd-de; and that reverend priest had to listen to the same impetuous plea. The which he did, with a face unanswering as sheet copper, and told Juana merely that these things should be thought on. That should have been quite enough for a true believer; and if there ever was one it was Juana. But just then Faustin's babe kicked in her waist, and with unheard-of effrontery she added, "Are all witches who are not blind?" Then, aghast at her own presumption in speaking beyond the law, she fled out into the night.

By rights, the Father of All Medicine should have punished not only the witch but her contumacious great-granddaughter-in-law, and so he was seriously minded to do; but though medicine-men are human, and therefore vulnerable in their vanity, they are also human enough to be—a little human. And after the thoughtful night, Juana was

not clapped into the stocks beside the caballito poor old 'Chona bestrode.

Indeed, three days later, the alguazil mayor himself unbound the stolid 'Chona from the torture-horse and led her still mumbling to her home. No explanation was given, no verdict of acquittal was entered against the name of the accused; but she was free. And as things are never done in vain in the pueblo, her release was equivalent to the most eloquent engrossed certificate of innocence. 'Chona was out; therefore 'Chona was not a witch. What more would you have?

I dare say it was merely a coincidence that before Juan Rey's return from his next journey to Moqui—for you know the telegraph is rather speedier than burros, and he was compadre to the dead Faustin—the Gallup correspondence of the Albuquerque Rustler reported:

"A messenger from Tsia-a-lí says that a Mexican and a Navajo were found dead in their camp on the edge of Chaco cañon. Both had been shot asleep, so far as could be judged by the signs. The Mexican is thought to be one Teodoro Sanchez, a tin-horn gambler who is suspected of many crimes. He lived some years near the Moqui villages, and operated about the Tinajones, to the disadvantage of lonely travellers along that little-frequented trail. There is no clue to the man who killed these precious outcasts; but is is known that he wore moccasins of the Pueblo pattern. Last month a Pueblo Indian of Isleta was found murdered at the Tinajones, and it may be that the present killing was in revenge. At any rate, no one is lamenting the newly-defunct, so far as heard from."

In a moment of confidence, when a "Jimmyjohn" had come to me from California, and Desidério, the Father of All Medicine, had had his due complement thereof as an alleviation of my company, I asked him brazenly about this matter, which I knew as well as he, and he as well as I.

"Pues, compadrecito," he said; which implies that he was well along in the confidential vein. "Heé-e-chu! Who knows? How did she know? Well, any one might know that Sanchez was a thief from birth, and that he had some meeting-point with his amigos at the Tinajones. Even

an old woman could guess that any one who went with money and Sanchez would not come back."

"But Faustin did not know, nor his people, nor some very wise officials of the pueblo. And I remember that you shut up old 'Chona because she did know."

But Desidério was imperturbable. "It is always more easy to know things afterwards," he said.

THE OLD MILL ON THE ELKHORN*

By James Lane Allen

Perhaps few streams in America flow through a landscape more rich and beautiful than the Kentucky Elkhorn. Past the rolling acres of peaceful, prosperous farmers, past secluded homesteads, the green lawns which slope gently to its banks, winding now through fields of heavy-headed wheat or feathery hemp or bending maize, sometimes forming into deep, still woodland pools haunted by the bass, at other times broadening into shallows that flash across beds of brown stones and emerald moss—it wanders on and on, with many a backward turn as if loath to pass away and with many a murmur of farewell to the scenes it is forever leaving.

Great trees grow on its banks and bend to each other above its mirroring surface: ancient oaks, rich gnarled walnuts and gigantic glistening sycamores with leopard-spotted limbs. On its banks, also, from earliest spring till late autumn, appear in long succession the many-numbered race of wild flowers—beds of violets, blue and white, pink-fringed and ox-eyed daisies, clumps of elder bloom, rich in color like old lace, fields of goldenrod and luxuriant growths of ironwood, tufted with royal purple.

On its fresh hillsides and clover-matted slopes flocks of long-wooled sheep seem always to be grazing; in the knee-deep verdure of the meadows herds of ponderous, soft-eyed cattle, half in sunlight, half in the shadows of drooping elms, are always grouping themselves into pictures of pastoral peace; and from out the woodland pastures the long-legged thoroughbreds, as light and mild as deer, come down to drink beauty and fleetness from its nourishing waters.

But follow its course through the changing scenery of

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the land or past all the kindly aspects of human life, and nothing that the eye rests upon will more deeply touch the imagination or the heart than the sight here and there of its half-hidden, half-forgotten, thick-walled, gray-stone mills. No other memorials preserve so well as these the traces of a simple industry once everywhere common but now fast vanishing or quite extinct. No other landmarks point so plainly to the erstwhile quieter manners and ways of rural life, or recall with vividness so overshadowed with regret the happy, rustic pictures of bygone years. Weather-stained and crumbling creek-side mills of the past! Progress has abandoned them, and now looks with good-natured contempt upon what was once the source of its honor and its pride. But, although the days of their usefulness are over—although they stand silent, motionless ruins amid the ever-young harvest-fields which are garnered for them no longer—to many an eye the snow-white foam still falls in dreamy cascades from their ponderous, blackened wheels, and many an ear still gathers to itself all the melodies of their vanished happiness.

Under the shade of some tree in sight of one throw yourself upon the green turf, close your eyes and let memory take its course.

Once more it is a summer day—the long, summer day of boundless leisure and a quiet world. The calm blue of the sky overhead is not ruffled by a single passing cloud. Drowsily from the shimmering fields that spread their green and golden bounty on all the slopes of the surrounding farms come the notes of the quail. There are no other sounds than these except the trickle of the shadowy waters under the mill, or of some little cataract that flows fitfully across the dark-gray dam. The miller, dressed in home-spun blue, sits in the open door of the mill, his head dropped forward on his breast—asleep. Asleep is the huge wheel of the mill a few feet away. Asleep in the pools of the creek that wind below are the muddy, black swine, their snouts hidden beneath smartweed and dog fennel. Asleep is the turtle that has crept forth upon a rotting snag in the current of the ford. Even the restless blue-winged snake-doctors seem asleep on jutting points of stone.

Then slowly down the opposite lane comes the millboy astride his bag of corn. The neck of his white cotton shirt is open down his bosom and he wears a straw hat, the torn rim of which rests on his shoulder. His feet are bare and newly scratched with briars, and his lips are stained with the wayside blackberries that he has loitered to enjoy. On the gentle neck of his old white mare lies the rope rein of the blind bridle, as he presses to his mouth, half in a dream, the homemade cherry whistle with which he has been blowing away solitude from his tedious path. Slowly he emerges from the mouth of the lane, and then, as he catches sight of the miller asleep in the doorway across the creek, with a shout that sends the echoes flying he calls to him to wake up and grind his corn.

What a world of rural peace and plenty belongs to them! By what a realm of pure and happy hearthstones are they surrounded! What pictures of innocent love and hallowed marriage rise in the memory as the tokens and the rewards of such simplicity!

But there stands today on the banks of the Elkhorn an old mill which brings to the minds of those who know its history none but the most saddening reminiscences. And few people there are living in that region of Kentucky to whom its history is not known. For many a year now it has furnished the theme for talk around evening hearthstones, when there were no children present to be affected by the tale. Many a sermon it has become the text of at the country church half a mile up the creek, when on Sunday mornings the well-dressed young farmers were seated in the pews beside their comely wives. And many a time the blacksmith, whose shop is at the crossroads opposite the church, has dropped the half-shod foot of a horse from his leather apron, and, wiping his sweating forehead with his bared and sooty arm, has paused to tell the story with a face full of fierce sorrow to some eagerly listening traveller. Nor, perhaps, has any traveller, after having heard the story, ever allowed his horse to drink at the ford above which the old mill stands, without bending upon it his long and mournful gaze. Well for him if, with a shadow of alarm darkening his face, he has not then suddenly urged

on the pace of his horse, with dark thoughts of his beloved wife at home.

More than any picture of ruin the old mill stands to the eye of any beholder who is acquainted with its past. Worse than all natural decay is the air of abandonment which changes it into a symbol of human desolation. Not the sight of its roof, rotten and fallen in, or thought of the snows of winter that sift down and melt away unheeded—not the summer weeds and grasses which rankle above the mold of the overturned wheel—not the hinges rusting in the doorless walls or the millstones split by frost—give to the spot its power over the imagination or throw about it an atmosphere pervaded with the suggestions of human sorrow.

Its history may be briefly told. It was built a good many years ago by a wealthy farmer of that region, who chose to indulge himself in the luxury of grinding his own wheat and corn for his own table, and for the abundant tables of his numerous slaves. It was a fine thing to him also to grind for his neighbors, inasmuch as this was not a necessity. Moreover, on wet days when he did not care to go to town and could not ride out into the fields, he was sure of finding company at the mill; and many a jovial hour he and his friends, whose habits of life were as free and easy as his own, spent there in company, planning a fox-chase or a barbecue, or discussing the prices of negroes and mules.

The luxurious ideals of his class bore their hard and bitter fruit in season, and by the time the war broke out his rich estate was heavily mortgaged. During that great struggle he, with his eldest son, fell fighting with the armies on one side; his second son fell on the other; and the youngest—the sole survivor—came home when peace returned, having himself just reached the period of early manhood.

His first act was to pay off the debts of the estate; and when this was done he found that enough was left him to retain as his the mill and a few acres of woodland pasture which adjoined it and sloped gradually from the bank of the creek to the fertile fields beyond. Something better might have been expected of him perhaps than that he should settle down to the life of a miller on a fragment of

the estate which had once been his home; but he was sick of a roving life, and yearned for the quietude and ties of familiar associations. Nor was there any other place left him which seemed so homelike as the mill, and he could not bear the thought that this also should pass into other hands.

Every nook and recess of it was stored with a thousand memories of his childhood. As a youth he had sometimes been allowed to run it, with a strange sense of delight in his power to govern its mighty movements; and afterwards, many a night, when thousands of miles away, he had wrapped himself in his blanket and lain down to sleep beside the dying camp fires, with its low music filling his dreams until the morning of the footsore march. But above all, the reason for his settling down so quickly and contentedly in his old neighborhood was the fact that within a week from the time of his returning to it he was ardently in love, and within a year had built a pretty, cottage-like home halfway up the woodland adjoining the mill, and had married.

Poor Meriwether! For I shall call him Meriwether, out of respect for the privacy of his real name. He was withal the most lovable man I have ever known. He was robustly formed, and had a face that indicated a strange mixture of courage and good humor; and he was endowed with a simple trustfulness of nature toward whatever he loved that bespoke the ardor and honor of his own character.

His marriage was one of those marriages of perfect love that sometimes, at least, are made in real life. His wife was the daughter of a farmer, whose estate had adjoined his father's, and he had known her since childhood. At the log schoolhouse down the lane, distant three-quarters of a mile from the mill, they had been together through many a session's adventures—through the hickory-nut hunting and the gathering of wild grapes. During the long prayers in the little church on Sunday mornings many a time they had stolen glances at each other across the high wooden partition which divided the women from the men. And when one day, dressed in uniform and looking strangely handsome, he had unexpectedly presented himself and told

her that he had come to say good-by, with trembling fingers she had pinned a rose on his bosom and had burst into tears as he put his arms around her and kissed her, and then was gone.

But she had forgotten all this by the time the war was over. She allowed herself to be introduced to him with a charming affectation when she met him for the first time in the churchyard after the sermon. She had grown very pretty, meantime, and there were half a dozen young farmers in the neighborhood whose attentions she was receiving. Meriwether, on the other hand, had also come to manhood—bringing back with him along with his brown soldier's face, the handsomer for a thick mustache, that romantic attraction with which one is invested who returns from heroic battlefields. But most of all, he had brought back with him a heart-hunger for the society of women, that showed itself in the steady light of his eyes, in the trembling tones of his voice, and the clinging pressure of his rough hand.

And so she fell in love with him—alas! he had loved her all the time—and so, as I have said, they were married within a year.

And so I say again, poor Meriwether! During the year that followed upon their marriage how happy he was! Business was everywhere reviving in the country, and the mill, which he had newly equipped, was kept running from morning till night. A few hundred yards up the hill was his home with his young wife in it. He would often spring up the footpath to snatch a kiss from her between times; and when she in turn would noiselessly enter the mill, where he was always whistling or singing with thoughts of her, he would strain her to his heart, which seemed ready to burst with too much happiness. This happiness, perhaps, there will be none so niggard as to begrudge him.

During that period many persons were passing from the North southward in search of new fortunes; and toward the autumn of the next year the trustees of the school in the lane happened upon and secured the services of a young Mr. Charles Fletcher for the next session. He came directly from Ohio, but said his home was in the state of New York. One of the trustees brought Mr. Fletcher home with

him one Saturday afternoon from the neighboring town; and at church the next morning, after the custom of the people, the young teacher made the acquaintance of most of the neighbors, among whom were Meriwether and his wife. Meriwether was called aside at that moment, and it was noticed by several persons that Mr. Fletcher and Mrs. Meriwether seemed to fall at once into sprightly talk and that she exhibited to him her prettiest manners.

During the week Mr. Fletcher visited from place to place in the neighborhood, making up his school; but there was much difficulty in settling where he should live. A formal meeting of the trustees was held at the blacksmith shop to consider the subject, Mr. Fletcher being also present; and it was he who finally proposed, all other proposals seeming to fail, that he should live with the Meriwethers. Strangely enough, no one had thought of this, which would be a capital arrangement. One of the trustees jumped on his horse and rode down to the mill and laid the matter before Meriwether. Meriwether was heartily willing, but said he would defer to the preference of his wife. When he consulted her a color came quickly into her face, and she gave reasons why Mr. Fletcher should not come; but when Meriwether said "Very well," she urged that Mr. Fletcher would be good company for him. Meriwether kissed her and said that he needed no other company, but at the end of that week Mr. Fletcher had come to live at the cottage.

He was handsome, intelligent and had fascinating manners. Meriwether was, if possible, happier than ever through his company. He had some one with whom to talk endlessly of his campaigns, or from whom he could hear endless talk of life at the North. His only source of secret regret was the reserve with which Mr. Fletcher treated his wife, and the dislike which his wife secretly professed to him that she felt for the young teacher.

Before many months passed, Mrs. Meriwether began to show an unusual interest in the school. She would frequently go down Friday afternoons when there was a special programme, and Mr. Fletcher would walk back with her. At first it had been his habit to come by the mill and stay there until Meriwether closed it for the night, and then

the two men would go home together. Now he began to go home directly from the schoolhouse, reaching it an hour before Meriwether returned. And thus the session came to an end.

When Mr. Fletcher had gone north for the summer, Meriwether's wife grew suddenly restless and visited much in the neighborhood, although hitherto she had stayed closely at home. Summer passed. At the opening of the autumn Mr. Fletcher was again at home with the Meriwethers. It was perhaps two months later that a young farmer of the neighborhood came to the mill one day and took Meriwether more warmly than usual by the hand, looking at him the while with eyes in which was the light of a man's sympathy. Then he sat down and talked of many things; of the mill, the church, the blacksmith-shop, the school, and Mr. Fletcher. His voice trembled strangely as he looked fixedly at Meriwether again and said that Mr. Fletcher was a man whom he should not like to have in his house. Meriwether defended the teacher. A month later two families in the neighborhood took their children from the school.

It was at the close of a dark day in December, a week after this, that Meriwether closed the mill for the night and sprang eagerly up the hillside toward his home. A wind swept gloomily through the great, ice-laden trees, causing the branches to groan aloud, and sending to his heart a thrill of delight in the warm fireside he was soon to reach. At a certain bend of the footpath he always came in sight of the ruddy panes; but tonight, when he reached this point, no kindly light met his eye. On his home lay the pall of darkness.

With a sudden chill of fear and great strides he sprang up the hillside and hurried into the house. There was not even a smoking ember on the hearth. He went to the kitchen. There was no fire in the stove. The old negro cook, as he afterwards learned, had early in the afternoon been sent on an errand to a distant neighbor's. He ran upstairs to Fletcher's room. It was fireless and deserted. Then he came slowly downstairs again and, in a voice tremulous with anguish and scarcely audible for the deathly

faintness that came over him, he called the name of his wife. Only the desolate echoes of his own voice came back to him.

He sped out under the lowering night to the nearest neighbor with inquiry, and then to another and another. Everywhere there met him only troubled faces and evasive replies, and all the vain but touching marks of sympathy. All had dreaded the tragedy save him.

Before that night of shame and sorrow passed, the miserable truth had forced itself upon him. When he came home again and had lit a lamp, he found that all the things of Fletcher had gone except an empty trunk; and when he had entered his own bedroom, set the lamp upon the table, and sat down in a chair beside it, slowly, one by one,—in opened drawers and familiar little articles of dress lying here and there as if forgotten,—he read the proofs of his fate.

The next day he was gone in pursuit. A month later he returned. To all those who would have questioned him he returned brief but kindly answers. He had heard of them, but he had not found them. For a while he lingered in the neighborhood, seeming like one who had lost all purpose of living. Then, as if finding the place intolerable, he went away without telling any one good-by. Some six months later he wrote back from Missouri, giving instructions to have his place sold, except the mill. He said that he wanted the money to go into business where he was, but that it might not turn out well and that he might wish to come back and start the mill again. It was a curious whim, as if of a sorely burdened and distracted brain.

Two years later he was heard from indirectly as being in Colorado, and after that as being in southern California. But since then a good many years have passed. It is not known whether he is longer living. Possibly he may be living under an assumed name in some spot where no connection with his past may ever reach him.

But, meantime, the ruins of the old mill stand on the banks of the Elkhorn.

A GRACELESS HUSBAND*

By Hamlin Garland

Beyond his necessity, a tired man is not apt to be polite. This Mrs. Miner had generalized from long experience with her husband. She knew at a distance, by the way he wore his hat when he came in out of the field, whether he was in a peculiarly savage mood, or only in his usual state of sullen indifference.

As he came in out of the barn on this spring day, he turned to look up at the roof with a curse. Something had angered him. He did not stop to comb his hair after washing at the pump, but came into the neat kitchen, and surlily took a seat at the table.

Mrs. Miner, a slender little woman, quite ladylike in appearance, had the dinner all placed in steaming abundance upon the table, and the children, sitting side by side, watched their father in silence. There was an air of foreboding, of apprehension, over them all, as if they feared some brutal outbreak on his part.

He placed his elbows on the table. His sleeves were rolled up, displaying his red and much sunburned arms. He wore no coat, and his face was sullen, and held, besides, a certain vicious quality, like that of a bad-tempered dog.

He had not spoken to his wife directly for many weeks. For years it had been his almost constant habit to address her through the children, by calling her "she" or "your mother." He had done this so long that even the little ones were startled when he said, looking straight at her:

"Say, what are you goin' t' do about that roof?"

Mrs. Miner turned her large gray eyes upon him in sudden confusion. "Excuse me, Tom, I didn't—"

"I said, 'What you goin' t' do about that roof?' " he repeated brutally.

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"What roof?" she asked timidly.

"What roof?" he repeated after her. "Why, the barn, of course? It's leakin' and rottin' my oats. It's none o' my business," he went on, his voice containing an undercurrent of vicious insult, "only I thought you'd like to know it's worse than ever. You can do as you like about it," he said again, and there was a peculiar tone in his voice, as if, by using that tone, he touched her upon naked nerves somewhere. "I guess I can cover the oats up."

A stranger would not have known what it all meant, and yet there was something in what he said that made his wife turn white. But she answered quietly:

"I'll send word to the carpenter this afternoon. I'm sorry," she went on, the tears coming to her eyes. She turned away and looked out of the window, while he ate on indifferently. At last she turned with a sudden impulse: "O Tom, why can't we be friends again? For the children's sake, you ought to—"

"Oh, shut up!" he snarled. "Good God! Can't you let a thing rest? Suits me well enough. I ain't complainin'. So, just shut up."

He rose with a slam, and went out. The two children sat with hushed breath. They knew him too well to cry out.

Mrs. Miner sat for a long time at the table, without moving. At last she rose, and went sighfully at work: "Morty, I want you to run down to Mr. Wilber's, and ask him to come up and see me about some work." She stood at the window and watched the boy, as he stepped lightly down the road. "How much he looks like his father, in spite of his sunny temper," she thought, and it was not altogether a pleasant thing to think of, though she did not allow such a thought to take definite shape.

The young carpenter whom Wilber sent to fill Mrs. Miner's order walked with the gay feet of youth, as he passed out of the little town toward the river. When he came to the bridge he paused and studied the scene with slow, delighted eyes. The river came down over its dam with a leap of buoyant joy, as if leaping to freedom. Above the dam it lay in a quiet pool, mirroring every bud and twig. Below, it curved away between low banks, with bushes growing to the water's edge, where the pickerel lay.

But the young man seemed to be saddened by the view of the mill, which had burned some years before. It seemed like the charred body of a living thing, this heap of blackened and twisted shafts and pulleys, lying half-burned in tangles of weeds.

It appealed so strongly to young Morris that he gave an unconscious sigh, as he walked on across the bridge and clambered the shelving road, which was cut out of the yellow sandstone of the hillside.

The road wound up the sandy hillside, and came, at length, to a beautiful broad terrace of farm-land, that stretched back toward the higher bluffs. The house toward which the young fellow went was painted white, and had green blinds, which transplanted New Englanders carry with them wherever they go.

Soldierly Lombardy poplar trees stood in the yard, and beds of flowers lined the walk. Mrs. Miner was at work in the beds when he came up.

"Good day," he said cordially. "Glorious spring weather, ain't it?" He smiled pleasantly. "Is this Mrs. Miner?"

"Yes, sir." She looked at him wonderingly.

"I'm one of Wilber's men," he explained. "He couldn't get away, so he sent me up to see what needed doing."

"Oh," she said, with a relieved tone. "Very well; will you go look at it?"

They walked, side by side, out toward the barn. It had the look of great age in its unpainted decay. It was gray as granite, and worn fuzzy with sleet and snow. The young fellow looked around at the grass, the dandelions, the vague and beautiful shadows flung down upon the turf by the scant foliage of the willows and apple trees, and took off his hat, as if in the presence of something holy. "What a lovely place," he said, "all but the mill down there; it seems too bad it burned up. I hate to see a ruin, most of all, one of a mill." She looked at him in surprise. She saw he was not at all an ordinary workman. He had a thoughtful face, and the workman's dress he wore could not entirely conceal a certain delicacy of limb. His voice had a touch of cultivation in it.

"The work I want done is on the barn," she said at length. "Do you think it needs reshingling?"

He looked up at it critically, his head still bare. She noticed his head now, a good, strong, clearly defined profile. There was something fine and powerful in the poise of his head.

"You haven't been working for Mr. Wilber long," she said.

He turned toward her with a smile of gratification, as if he knew she had detected something out of the ordinary in him.

"No, I'm just out of school, at the university," he said, with ready confidence. "You see, I'm one of these fellows that have to work my passage. I got hard up, and had to go to work again." He looked up at the roof again, as if checking himself. "Yes, I should think from here that it would have to be reshingled."

She sighed resignedly, and he knew she was poor. "Well, I suppose you had better do it."

She thought of him pleasantly, as he walked off down the road after the lumber and tools that were necessary. And, in his turn, he wondered whether she were a widow or not. It promised to be a pleasant job. She was quite handsome, in a serious way, he decided—very womanly and dignified. Perhaps this was his romance, he thought, with the ready imagination upon this point of a youth of his age.

He returned soon with a German teamster, who helped him unload his lumber and erect his stagings. When noon came he was working away on the roof, tearing the old shingles off with a spade.

He was a little uncertain about his dinner. It was the custom to board carpenters when they were working on a farm, but the farm was so near town, possibly Mrs. Miner would not think it necessary. He decided, however, to wait till one o'clock, to be sure. At half past twelve, a man came in out of the field with a team—a short man, with curly hair, curly chin-beard and mustache. He walked with a little swagger, and his legs were slightly bowed. Morris called him "a little feller," and catalogued him by the slant on his hat.

"Say," called Morris suddenly, "won't you come up here and help me raise my staging?"

The man looked up with a muttered curse of surprise. "Who the hell y' take me for? Hired man?" he asked, and then, after a moment, continued, in a tone which was an insult: "You don't want to rip off the whole broadside of that roof. Ain't y' got any sense? Come a rain, it'll raise hell with my hay."

"It ain't going to rain," Morris replied. He wanted to give him a sharp reply, but concluded not to do so. This was evidently the husband. His romance was very short.

"Tom, won't you call the man in?" asked Mrs. Miner, as her husband came up to the kitchen door.

"No, call 'im yourself. You've got a gullet."

Mrs. Miner's face clouded a little, but she composed herself. "Morty, run out and tell the carpenter to come to dinner."

"Boss is in a temper," Morris thought, as he listened to Miner's reply. He came up to the well, where Morty brought him a clean towel, and waited to show him into the kitchen.

Miner was just sitting down to the table when Morris entered. His sleeves were rolled up. He had his old white hat on his head. He lounged upon one elbow on the table. His whole bearing was swinish.

"What do I care?" he growled, as if in reply to some low-voiced warning his wife had uttered. "If he don't like it, he can lump it, and if you don't like my ways," he said, turning upon her, "all you've got to do is to say so, and I git out."

Morris was amazed at all this. He could not believe that he understood what had been said. There was something beneath the man's words which puzzled him and forbade his inquiry. He sat down near the oldest child and opposite Mrs. Miner. Miner began to eat, and Morris was speaking pleasantly to the child nearest him, when he heard an oath and a slap. He looked to see Miner's hat falling from Mrs. Miner's cheek.

She had begun a silent grace, and her husband had thrown his hat in her face. She kept her eyes upon her plate, and her lips moved as if in prayer, though a flush of red streamed up her neck and covered her face.

Morris leaped up, his eyes burning into Miner's face. "H'yere!" he shouted, "What's all this? Did you strike her?"

"Set down!" roared Miner. "You're too fresh."

"I'll let you know how fresh I am," said the young fellow, shaking his brawny fist in Miner's face.

Mrs. Miner rose, with a ghastly smile on her face, which was now as pale as it had been flushed. "Please don't mind him; he's only fooling." Morris looked at her, and understood a little of her feeling as a wife and mother. He sat down. "Well, I'll let him know the weight of my fist, if he does anything more of that business when I'm around," he said, looking at her, and then at her husband. "I didn't grow up in a family where things like that go on. If you'll just say the word, I—I'll—"

"Please don't do anything," she said, and he saw that he had better not, if he wished to shield her from further suffering. The meal proceeded in silence. Miner apparently gloried in what he had done.

The children were trembling so they could scarcely eat. They dared not cry. Their eyes were fixed upon their father's face, like the eyes of kittens accustomed to violence. The wife tried to conceal her shame and indignation. She thought she succeeded very well, but the big tears rolling down from her wide, unseeing eyes were pitiful to witness.

Morris ate his dinner in silence, not seeing anything further to do or say. His food choked him, and he found it necessary to drink great drafts of water.

At last, she contrived to say, "How did you find the roof?" It was a pitiful attempt to cover the dreadful silence.

"It was almost as good as no roof at all," he replied, with the desire to aid her. "Those shingles, I suppose, have been on there for thirty years. I suppose those shingles must have been rived out by just such a machine as Old Man Means used, in 'The Hoosier Schoolmaster.'" From this, he went on to tell about some of the comical parts of the story, and so managed to end the meal in a fairly presentable way.

"She's found another sympathizer," sneered the hus-

band, returning to his habit of addressing his wife in the third person.

After eating his dinner, Miner lit his pipe and swaggered out, as if he had done an admirable thing. Morris remained at the table, talking with the children. After Miner had gone out, he looked up at Mrs. Miner, as if expecting her to say something in explanation of what had occurred. But she had again forgotten him, and sat biting her lips and looking out of the window. Her bosom heaved, like that of one about to weep. Her wide-open eyes had unutterable sorrow in their beautiful depths.

Morris got up and went out, in order to prevent himself from weeping too. He hammered away on the roof like mad for an hour, and wished that every blow fell on that little villain's curly pate.

He did not see Mrs. Miner to speak to her again till the next forenoon, when she came out to see how the work was getting on. He came down from the roof to meet her, and they stood side by side, talking the job over and planning other work. She spoke, at last, in a low, hesitating voice, and without looking at him:

"You mustn't mind what Mr. Miner does. He's very peculiar, and you're likely—that is, I mean—"

She could not finish her lie. The young man looked down on her resolutely. "I'd like to lick him, and I'd do it for a leather cent."

She put out her hand with a gesture of dismay. "Oh, don't make trouble; please don't."

"I won't if you don't want me to, but that man needs a licking the worst of any one I ever saw." "Mrs. Miner," he said, after a little pause, "I wish you'd tell me why he acts that way. Now, there must be some reason for it. No sane man is going to do a thing like that."

She looked away, a hot flush rising upon her face. She felt a distinct longing for sympathy. There was something very engaging in this young man's candid manner.

"I do not know who is to blame," she said at last, as if in answer to a question. "I've tried to be a good wife to him for the children's sake. I've tried to be patient. I suppose if I'd made the property all over to him, as most wives

do, at first, it would have avoided all trouble." She paused to think a moment.

"But, you see," she went on suddenly, "father never liked him at all, and he made me promise never to let the mill or the farm go out of my hands, and then I didn't think it necessary. It belonged to us both, just as much as if I'd signed it over. I considered he was my husband. I knew how father felt, especially about the mill, and I couldn't go against his wish."

She had the impulse to tell it all now, and she sat down on a bunch of shingles, as if to be able to state it better. Her eyes were turned away, her hands sought each other like timid, living things seeking aid, and, looking upon her, the young man felt a lump rise in his throat.

"It began all at once, you see. I mean the worst of it did. Of course, we'd had sharp words, as all people who live together are apt to have, I suppose, but they didn't last long. You see, everything was mine, and he had nothing at all when he came home with me. He'd had bad luck, and he—he never was a good business man."

The tears were on her face again. She was retrospectively approaching that miserable time when her suffering began. The droop of her head appealed to the young man with immense power. He had an impulse to take her in his arms and comfort her, as if she were his sister.

She mastered herself at last, and went on, in a low, monotonous way: "One day, the same summer the mill burned, one of the horses kicked at little Morty, and I said I'd sell it, and he said it was all nonsense; the horse wasn't to blame. And I told him I wouldn't have a horse around that would kick. And when he said I shouldn't sell it, I said a dreadful thing. I knew it would cut him, but I said it. I said, 'The horse is mine; the farm is mine; I can do what I please with my own, for all of you.' "

She fell silent here, and Morris was forced to ask, "What did he do then?"

"He looked at me, a queer, long look that made me shiver, and then he walked off, and he never spoke to me again directly for months. And from that day, he almost never speaks to me, except through the children. He calls

me names through them. He cuts me every time he can. He does everything he can to hurt me. He never dresses up, and he wears his hat in the house at all times, and rolls up his sleeves at the table, just because he knows it makes me suffer. Sometimes I think he is crazy, and yet—"

"Oh, no, he ain't crazy. He's devilish," Morris blurted out. "Great guns! I'd like to lay my hands on him."

She seemed to feel that a complete statement was demanded. "I can't invite anybody to the house, for there's no knowing what he'll do. He may stay in the fields all day, and never come in at all, or he may come in and curse and swear at me or do something—I never can tell what he is goin' to do."

"Haven't you any relatives here?" Morris asked.

"Yes, but I'm ashamed to let them know about it, because they all said I'd repent; and then, he's my husband, and he's the father of my children."

"A mighty poor excuse of one, I call him," said the young man with decision.

"I tried to give him the farm, when I found it was going to make trouble, but he wouldn't take it then. He won't listen to me at all. He keeps throwing it up to me that he's earning his living, and if I don't think he is, he will go any minute. He works in the field, but that's all. He won't advise with me at all. He says it's none of his business. He won't do a thing around the house or garden. I tried to get him to oversee the mill for me, but, after our trouble, he refused to do anything about it. I hired a man to run it, but it didn't pay that way, and then it was idle for a while, and at last it got afire some way and burned up—tramps, I suppose.

"Oh, dear," she sighed, rising, "I don't see how it's going to end; it must end some time. Sometimes it seems as if I couldn't stand it another day, and then I think of my duty as a mother and wife, and I think perhaps God intended this to be my cross."

The young fellow was silent. It was a great problem. The question of divorce had never before been borne in upon him in this personal way. It seemed to him a clear case. The man ought to be driven off, and the woman left in

peace. He thought of the pleasure it would give her to hear the sound of the mill again.

They stood there, side by side, nearly the same age, and yet the woman's face was already lined with suffering, and her eyes were full of shadow. There seemed no future for her, and yet she was young.

"Please don't let him know I've said anything to you, will you?"

"I'll try not to," he said, but he did not consider himself bound to any definite concealment.

They ate dinner together without Miner, who had a fit of work on hand which made him stubbornly unmindful of any call to eat. He thought it would worry his wife.

The meal was a pleasant one, on the whole, and they found many things in common to talk about. Morris wanted to ask her a few more questions about her life, but she begged him not to do so, and started him off on the story of his college life. He was an enthusiastic talker, and told her his plans with boyish frankness. He forgot his fatigue, and she lost, for a time, her premature cares and despairs. They were laughing together over some of his college pranks, when Miner came in at the door.

"Oh, I see," he said, with an insulting, insinuating inflection. "Now I understand the early dinner."

Morris sprang up, and, walking over to the sneering husband, glared down at him with a look of ferocity that sat singularly upon his round, fresh face. "Now, you shut up! If you open your mouth to me again I'll lick you till your hide won't hold pumpkins."

Miner shrank back, turned on his heel, and went off to the barn. He did not return for his dinner.

Morris insisted on helping Mrs. Miner clear up the yard and uncover the grape vine. He liked her very much. She appealed to the protector in him, and she interested him besides, because of the melancholy which was lined on her delicate face, and voiced in her low, soft utterances.

He appealed to her, because of his delicacy, as well as strength. He had something of the modern man's love for flowers, and did not attempt to conceal his delight in thus tinkering about at woman's work. He ate supper with her,

and worked on until it was quite dark, tired as he was, and then shook hands and said "Good night."

Morris came back to his work the next day with a great deal of anticipation of pleasure. He had spent considerable thought upon the matter. He had almost determined on a course of action. He had thought of going directly to Miner and saying:

"Now look here, Miner, if you was half a man, you'd pull out, and leave this woman in peace. How you can stand around here, and occupy the position you do, I don't see."

But when he remembered Mrs. Miner's words about the children, another consideration came in. Suppose he should take the children with him—that was the point; that was the uncertain part of the problem. It did not require any thought to remember that the law took very little consideration of the woman's feelings. He said to himself that, if he ever became judge, he would certainly give decisions that would send such a man as Miner simply whirling out into space.

Miner was in the barn when Morris clambered up the ladder with a bunch of shingles on his shoulder, about seven o'clock. He came out and said:

"Say, you want to fix that window up there."

"Get away from there," shouted Morris, in uncontrollable rage, "or I'll smash this bunch of shingles on your cussed head. Don't you open that ugly p'tater trap at me, you bow-legged little skunk. I'm going to lick you like a sock, before I'm done with you."

He would have done so then, had he been on the ground, but he disdained taking the trouble to climb down. He planned to catch him when he came up to dinner. The more he thought of it, the more his indignation grew. As he grew to hate the man more, he began to entertain the suspicions to which Wilber confessed in confidence.

They had a cheerful meal together again, for Miner did not come in until one o'clock. During the nooning Morris finished spading the flower beds, in spite of Mrs. Miner's entreaties that he should rest. It gave him great pleasure to work there with her and the children.

"You see, I'm lonesome here," he explained. "Just out of school, and I miss the boys and girls. I don't know anybody, except a few of the carpenters here, and so—well, I kind of like it. I always helped around the house at home."

He spaded away, without many words. The warm sun shone down upon them all, and they made a pretty group. Mrs. Miner, rake in hand, was pulverizing the beds as fast as he spaded, her face flushed, and almost happy. The children were wrist-deep in the fresh earth, planting twigs and pebbles, their babble of talk someway akin to the cry of the woodpecker, the laugh of the robin, the twitter of the sparrow, the smell of spring, and the merry downpour of sunshine.

Mrs. Miner was silent. She was thinking how different her life would have been if her husband had only taken an interest in her affairs. She did not think of any one else as her husband, but only Miner in a different mood.

Morris went back to work. As the work neared the end, his determination to punish the scoundrel husband grew. His inclination to charge him with burning the mill grew stronger. He wondered if it wouldn't serve as a club. "Now, sir," he said, meeting Miner as he came out of the barn that night, "I'm done on the barn, but I'm not done on you. I'm goin' to whale you till you won't know yourself. I ought 'o 'a' done it that first day at dinner." He advanced upon Miner, who backed away, scared at something he saw in the young man's eyes and something he heard in his inflexible tone of voice.

He thrust out his palm in a wild gesture. "Keep away from me. I'll split your heart if you touch me."

Morris advanced another step, his eyes looking straight into Miner's, with the level look of a tiger's. "No, y' won't. You're too much of an infernal, sneaky little whelp!"

At the word whelp, he cuffed him with his hammer-like fist, and Miner went down in a heap. He was so abject that the young man could only strike him with his open hand.

He took him by the shirt collar with his left hand, and began to cuff him, leisurely and terribly, with his right.

His blows punctuated his sentences. "You're a little (whack) villain. I'll thrash you till you won't see out of your blasted eyes for a month. I can't stand a man (here he jounced him up and down with his left hand, apparently with infinite satisfaction) who bullies his wife and children as you do (here he cuffed him again), and I'll make it my business to even things up—"

The prostrate man began to scream for help. He was livid with fear. He saw death in his assailant's eye.

"Help! help! Minnie!"

"Call her by her first name now (here he whacked him again with his right hand), will yeh? Call her out to help yeh! Do you think she will? I want to tell you, besides, I know something about that mill burning. It's just like your contemptible mustard-seed of a soul."

Mrs. Miner came flying out. She could not recognize her husband in the bleeding, dirty, abject thing squirming under the young man's knee.

"Why, Mr. Morris, who—why—why, it's Tom!" she gasped, her eyes distended with surprise and horror.

Morris looked up at her coolly. "Yes, it's Tom." He then gave his attention to the writhing figure under him. "Crawl, you infernal whelp! Lick the dust, confound you! (Here he whacked him again.) Quick!" he commanded, growing each moment more savage.

Mrs. Miner clung to his arm. "Please don't," she pleaded. "You're killing him."

Morris did not look up. "Oh, no, I ain't. I'm giving him a little taste of his own medicine." He flopped Miner over on his face and dragged him around in the dust, like an old sack. "Beg her pardon, or I'll thrash the ground with yeh!"

"Please don't," pleaded the wife, using her whole strength to stop him in his circuit with the almost insensible Miner.

"Beg!" he said again, "beg, or I'll cave your backbone in." There was a terrible upward inflection in his voice now, a half-jocular tone that was more terrible than the muffled snarl in which he had previously been speaking.

"I beg! I beg!" cried Miner.

Morris released him, and he crawled to a sitting posture. Mrs. Miner fell on her knees by his side, and began wiping the blood from his face. She was breathless with sobbing, and the children were screaming. The tears streamed down her face, which was white and drawn into ghastly wrinkles.

"You've killed him!" she gasped.

Morris put his hands in his pockets and looked down on them both, with a curious feeling of having done something which he might repent of. He felt, in a way, cut off from a satisfactory ending of the thing.

"Oh, you've killed him!"

"Oh, no, I haven't. He's all right." He looked at them a moment longer, as if to see if there was any rage remaining in the face of the husband, and then as if to see how the wife felt concerning his action. Then he looked back at the husband again, and apparently justified himself for what he had done by the memory of the ineffable shame to which the wife had been subjected.

"Now, if I hear another word of your abuse," he said, as he shook the dust from his own clothes and prepared to go, "I'll give you another that will make you think that this is all fooling. More than that," he said, turning again, "I know something that will put you where the crows won't eat you. If I can be of any service to you, Mrs. Miner, at any time while I'm here, I hope you'll let me know. Good-by!"

Mrs. Miner did not reply, and when Morris reached the gate and looked back, she was still kneeling by the side of her husband, the sunlight shining down upon her graceful head.

He went back to his work on the other side of the river, where his crew was working. He was called home a few weeks later, and he never saw husband or wife again. He learned from Wilber, however, in a short letter, that things were going much the same as ever:

"Dear Sir: I don't know much about Miner. Hees purty quiet, I guess. Dock Moss thinks hees a little off his nut. I don't. I think its pur cussidness."

THE SWEARING ENCHILADAS*

By Charles F. Lummis

"Come now, pull your freight, you prognathous pimple of Nineveh! Ever you turn up in ten miles circumjacent to these diggings again, the next tenderfoot that comes in will sure locate you for a lead claim—and we don't want any low-grade galenas in this gold camp. Are you becoming deef, you preposterous pustule? Will you get a wiggle, or have I got to pass you out some shoe-leather to accelerate your locomotor ataxia?"

For the burly culprit stood as if rooted, gaping down at this astonishing apparition. Hunks was no lamb. There were a dozen uninherited dimples on his hulking carcass—and after the Other Fellow was tired shooting, Hunks had taken his innings. As well expect a wild steer to be handy with a "gun"—and Hunks had never owned one. Nimbler spirits might file the "dog" of their Colt's "forty-four," and then "fan the hammer," but Hunks merely put down his head and walked in. That was one reason why his cropped skull was a very war map of furrows, pretty equitably divided, as to genesis, between the muzzles and the butts of six-shooters. But Hunks still carried his map—and some of the others were feeding wild flowers. He was freely conceded to be the only man in the Southwest whose private graveyard was exclusively handmade. For numbers, it was of course a mere beginning, compared to Billy Martin's twenty-three notches, or "the Kid's" twenty-four. But, after all, there was a certain smack of artificiality about their modus. The subjects "were sure planted"—yes, indeed. But suppose there had been no Colonel Colt? Whereas Hunks, sole, and without adventitious armament, had necessitated four several mounds by the simple process of

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tamping the floor with the skull which at the moment seemed to him most opportune. And four makes no count, of course, of Tombstone Annie, who was laid away ceremoniously and amid public lamentation, very presently after her ill-judged decision to feed Hunks no longer on the fat of what was Tucson in 1880.

Only once had "the Hassayamp Nutcracker" (so the Arizona Kicker dubbed him, in a moment of cheer) ever "taken the short end"—and that through no fault of his. Simply that his studies in craniology had not progressed to the comparative stage when a barrel-built Ethiop roustabout, broadcasting wet sawdust in "The Miner's Joy" at Quijotoa, failed to respect Hunks's boots. Even after so many and so consummate batterings that Red Mike was put to the expense of having a two-by-four joist replaced under the floor just in front of the bar—even then, the owner of the unconsenting "hammer" reached deftly up with a narrow ribbon of steel, and left Hunks to be a bad dream forever.

A nose doesn't seem much. You may wear one all your life, and never even notice whether it fits. But if once you see a real "chato," you may very likely feel up, every night and morning, to find if your chief disguise is still on straight. For it's all the difference between a face and a death's-head. A preponderant reason why Hunks's "tally" had never grown since that day was that he was an indifferent runner. Several owners of promising coconuts had saved them by "forgetting to wait" when that awful mask started for them. The meanest man of all had emptied three chambers full into the advancing giant—and then, in a panic, flung his sixshooter wild of Hunks's head and fled incontinently.

Yet this same Hunks stood now as quiet as a snubbing-post; his rufous chest bursting from the greasy woolen shirt, his hamlike fists loose against his knees, his stubbly jaw sagging, as he bent to observe this apparently irritated cricket.

"Goddlemighty!" he wheezed, admiringly, "yo' swear the prettiest I ever did see. 'F I had yo'r gift, I'd shore take up freighting. Why, mules would jest float! Wouldn't

never need to pound them on the back. It's awful useful to have a ejjication. That lullaby o' yo'rn is the soothinest thing I've heard since't I was on the Durango trail. Them arrieros is shore some! But looks to me there can't be no such comfort swearing Spanish—it sounds too much like poetry. Yo'rn, though—damme, it's good as a hundred-stamp mill, and no rattle, neither. Must be dreadful satisfying. Me, when there's a cuss coming to me, my tongue jest naturally balls all up, and I can't remember nothing to make a good mouthful. Say, Prof., would you mind biting me off a yard or two more of that same?"

"The Professor" was not really on tiptoe,—which would have given him an even five-foot-six,—but neither was there an ounce of weight resting on his heels. He somehow had a look of being large for his size. Seamed as it was with the deep, sharp lines of the arid lands, and though the hair crisping at the temples was more white than black, there was not a knotted capillary on the face—not even below the cheek bones. The eyes seemed small—sometimes. The bone roof came far out over them; and grizzled brows, thick and outstanding as the mustachios of a hussar, deepened and darkened the caves from which they peered. But then, again, there were times when you couldn't see his face, for the eyes of him—and this was one.

As for languages, he talked two—not to count the lingos that rolled off his tongue for the Mexicans and Frenchies and Dutchmen that drifted in and out the camp. No, two several languages of "United States." Sometimes it was a man talking who had been for twenty years professor of geology in an eastern college; and sometimes a man who for another twenty had been assayer, paymaster, engineer, mine-boss or superintendent at half of all the important holes in Arizona. Not infrequently it was a little of both. But whatever the dialect, the tone was always the same—mellow, penetrating, and absolutely point-blank. He never seemed to have to "raise his sights." It was, as the general commanding the department once observed: "Jove! a voice without any trajectory whatever!" It never whispered, it never flared—yet it was sure as a bullet of its mark. There was something solemn in being cursed by one who seriously,

gravely, without a rising inflection, and in chosen words, commended you to the unfavorable attention of your Maker, and the slow scorn of your kind. You can "light into" the crude person who gets red in the face swearing at you; but what are you to do, pray, with one who dispassionately, judicially—almost prayerfully—condemns your optics without batting his own, nor clogging of his temporal veins, nor so much difference of voice as between "Good morning" and "Good evening"?

Nothing, clearly. This was understood. In each of his many capacities all across the Southwest, this lean, little old man had "used language" to an innumerable assortment of them that claim nativity on the very headwaters of Bitter Creek; but no man had ever laid finger on him—nor crooked one, either. And whereas every other mine superintendent in Arizona, be his age what it might, was locally "The Old Man," this one was always and everywhere "The Professor." Now he resumed: "Swear for you, you amorphous slag from the run-off of Gehenna? Not any, or God forget me. Don't you know when your boss quits you? I want you to chase yourself! Sabe? And don't trail back, either. See? There's no room in Bonanza for a hind-legged dog that insults women."

"Aw!" Hunks's pendent jaw began to recover. "Women —Hell! Ain't she a Greaser? A dam fine one, though," he added, his lips moistening a little, as he looked back over the head of the Professor. "Say, now, what's the harm? I jest ketched her by the waist, and she squealed because she seen you coming. Just keep out o' the way, and you'd see! But mebbe you want her yo'r own-self"—and Hunks leered hideously.

This was not exactly the soft answer of Proverbs; but for a moment it was as effective. The Professor was startled out of his usual resiliency.

A faint pink crept up the bronzed cheek to the gray hair. He want any woman! He remembered a sweet and proper Yankee girl who might—who—but she had preferred the barber of the little college town; and she was dead these dozen years. As with so many men of the old frontier, women had become to him merely a beautiful

abstraction—a creed, if you will, to be defended hotly as creeds are—and no more practiced than they are wont to be. As for this woman, he had not even seen who she was. Simply, that pattering down the trail from the shafthouse. At the first corner, he had come upon Hunks besetting some screaming person in petticoats, had snatched him to the right-about with a force no one would have suspected in this neat little figure, and had faced the startled bully with the orthodox remarks which open this story. Now he turned with something like embarrassment to see who she was, anyhow.

Anita would have fled long ago; but when the opportune superintendent befell her persecutor she was flung by the very impact into the deep doorway of the adobe beside which she had been overtaken. Right in front of her were the solemn black coat-tails of the only man in camp who wore such splendor; and right in front of him stood The Terror. She could not move without pushing the senor superintendente—and, what was even more, her deliverer—full upon his death. So there she crouched against the weathered lintel, praying silently, yet with quick eyes. Now that he turned back to see her, he met a picture no man could forget—that oval face, upturned; pale olive, save where youth glowed ruddy in the cheeks, even under the little wet lines; and two great, dark eyes as deep as wells, and as clean. H'm! Apparently the daughter of Don Ygnacio, at the foot of the hill. Looked like him, anyhow—and the Professor vaguely remembered having seen some such face in his visits to the old Don. "That old Greaser down the grade," the nameless riff-raff of the camp called him; but even now the Professor smiled. In the chest of old papers he had pored upon in the Don's house, trying to find out something about the land grants that lapped three deep over the country, he had come upon the original papeles de nobleza of this very family. Date, 1541; signatory, His Majesty the Emperor Charles V. And in a dog-eared MS. volume, the descent as far as the birth of the oldest son of Don Ygnacio. So "that old Greaser" was a real Hidalgo—"Son of somebody as is somebody," which is precisely what "hidalgo" means.

The Professor was not so slow as I am. All this was in one sweep of the rifle-gray eyes. He swung back to face Hunks.

"I'm not wanting her," he said, briefly. "And neither do I want you. Git!"

I cannot tell you how it looks, if you have never seen it—and if you have, you need no telling. No one who has watched rage upon a chato will ever forget. Other eyes may thread with quick crimson, and other jaws set ugly. But Hunks! Where his nose should have been, there came a slow quiver! It is the grisliest thing that ever man dreamed to see.

The Professor understood. But he did not reach to his belt. Instead, he folded his arms and looked straight in the red eyes.

Hunks took a step forward. "What are you a-going to do about it, hey?"

"Me? Nothing"—and the Professor fell into the vernacular of the camp. "But the boys is going to have a baile at yan piñon in about five minutes, and you'll be It—dancing on nothing to the end of a rope."

Hunks straightened up. He was not too accurate himself, but he knew the truth when he met it—and he had seen piñon trees before now that bore something more than pine-nuts. He shifted on his columnar legs, wavered, half turned.

"That's no lie, I reckon, and it's me for the road. But some day it's you and me, you dam grasshopper. I'll pinch yo'r head for molasses, you —!"

Nobody had ever seen the Professor jump—if he walked faster than he talked, it was as evenly; and he never ran. But neither had any one ever heard him called the Last Epithet. Now, he did not so much jump as rise into the air. And just so, his coat-tails were plucked resistlessly by fingers as sure as they were slender; and Hunks slouched off down the trail unmolested, while the superintendent of the Bonanza King struggled ingloriously to his feet.

"But he would have killed you!" she cried, meeting his look.

Neither had any one seen the Professor impolite before. But now he said curtly: "And whose business?"

The girl's eyes filled; but she answered steadily: "It is my business. You saved me from him. Besides, you are my father's friend. Please let him go."

Unfamiliar sparks prickled in the Professor's brain. Did she really wish this brute to escape un-come-up-with? The shaggy brows lowered. He was too unconscious to dream that it might really be concern for himself—too unconscious or too vain. Not in lust of muscle, but by the cold mathematics of experience, he knew himself master. He would have tackled Behemoth's self with perfect simplicity and assurance.

Now he glowered at the girl half angrily, half in masculine condescension. "Very well," he said, a little drily. "I will let him go. But if he ever steps on Bonanza land again, I'll kill him."

Anita had risen. She was taller than the Professor, and supple as the buena moza that grows in the sandstone cliffs. For a moment she looked down wonderingly into those deep-pent eyes. What a man, who could vow to kill, and never lift his voice! But then a hot flush went up her throat and face, and she unconsciously swept her hand down her waist, with the gesture of one who brushes off pollution. "It is I who will kill him, if he ever comes back! You have no right. He called you bad words—but he touched me!" And as suddenly the fire of her eyes went out in a gush of tears.

The Professor shifted his feet uneasily, and his brows unbent. Poor child! He laid his hand on the bowed head —and drew back as if burnt. It is well known that at high and arid altitudes the hair becomes electric!

"Don't cry, child," he said, evenly but with a certain vibration that fell strange even on his own ear. "He will not come back. Nobody will trouble you. No hay cuidado! Run along home. And your father is Don Ygnacio, no? Then tell him there is somewhat more I would consult him about as to this Loma Prieta grant; and that if it serves his convenience I will come Sunday in the afternoon."

Anita smiled through her tears. "Will you not stay to dinner, then? My father would be so glad. But perhaps you do not like the Espanish food?"

The Professor almost beamed. "Why, I dote on it. It is hygienic, too, here where the climate makes the liver to sleep. But I never can get it hot enough. These tin-horn camp cooks—their chile is ninety per cent corn meal."

"But we have the real chile, in ristes, unground," smiled Anita, radiantly. "They will be like fire. If you will honor us for dinner, I will make you dishes myself, for Lupe is grown old, and sometimes she forgets even the oregano."

For one who was reputed never to have learned to smile —"not even with colic, as a baby," added the only man who had ever carried observation into criticism (and he was a mere dyspeptic Bostonian)—the Professor had a narrow escape for his reputation. "That blessed wild thyme," he mused, reminiscently. "Among all the seasonings, this is the very lady—indefinable but the last touch." And then he fairly blushed. What on earth? And he pinched himself. Talking like a toastmaster, eh—just because some one mentioned oregano!

But Anita did not comprehend. A higher color was in her cheeks. "Then it will be that you like albondigas?" she cried gayly.

"Madly," said the Professor, recovering a little, but still conscious of a strange obsession to talk the gibberish of the very world he had broken jail of, a score of years ago. Maybe it was a case of atavism, developing in his old age!

"And guajalote en mole, then?"

"I should think so! Juno herself would sacrifice her peacocks to such an apotheosis of mere bird into a means of grace!"

Anita's face fell perceptibly. So there was another lady who could feed him pavos! But she went on bravely: "Tamales, pues?"

The Professor's eyes were laughing, for his face could not yet forget a habit that was fixed before Anita was born. "Particularly tamales!" he answered, almost lightly. "If the husks the Prodigal lived on had had tamales inside, he never would have come back for the fatted calf. And I haven't had a fit tamal since eighty-four."

"Pobrecito!" And Anita laughed aloud—a soft little

laugh that the Professor felt like a tickling in his own throat. "That is the year my father and my mother were espoused—and it is long to go hungry. But they say—father says—that my tamales are fit for a king." Then, with a quick flush at this self-praise: "I hope you will think them good."

"I will," answered the Professor, with a queer little subconsciousness of willful choice as against "shall." "And how about chiles rellenos—do you make them with cheese or with force-meat?"

"Pues, we are Andaluz, you know, and we use the meat. But father lived long in Mexico, and I know also how to make them con queso, if you prefer."

"Not if you will put in raisins," the Professor qualified, thoughtlessly.

"But I always do, Senor! Father took the taste in Peru, and will never absolve me if I forget. And—m-m—enchiladas?"

There could be no doubt about it. The Professor's lips were giving way at the corners. "Bless your heart, child," he answered dreamily, "you must be a mind-reader! I seldom think about my food—except how bad it is. And that not often, though it's always bad. But if I had a real enchilada such as we used to get in Temosochic in eighty-six—hot and folded over, and plenty of aji—I think I could eat Sing's cooking for another six months before noticing—pardon! Of course you must go. It was my fault. Till Sunday, then"—for Anita was scudding down the trail, with just one glance backward. Curious, how much larger women's eyes were! And how disposed to moisture!

A remolino (that little dancing dervish of the desert sand) could scarce have raised more dust in the adobe kitchen than Anita when she pounced in upon the drowsy Lupe. "A grand dinner for Sunday! And much eye to this! And much eye to that! And leave every seed in the chile, without fail—for it must be muy quemoso! And plenty of oregano for the albondigas! And the last of the hoarded dry olives for the tamales and enchiladas. And Pepito must go out with his rifle, in the morning, to the Sierra, that there might be wild turkey for a mole. Also,

all the old silver, and—yes, the tablecloth that was mamma's."

"It will be His Lordship, pues," cackled Lupe, sitting up.

"What! the bishop?" cried Anita, and turned pale at her unconscious impiety. Then redder again, as she added: "No, the senor superintendente is to dine with my father, and he likes these dishes."

Lupe grunted, and would have freed her mind as patriarchal servants may; but the girl was already half way across the patio.

Safe in her own room, Anita buried a burning face in the pillow. So he had seen her at last—this wonderful man who was more masterful than even the old Don! No wonder that other gringos had no manners—this one had taken them all! And he spoke Spanish like an Andaluz! And he feared nothing—no, not the very Fiend—nor even that hideous chato! True, he had never seemed to see her when he came to counsel with papa; and he had to ask her if she was Don Ygnacio's daughter. Nay, he even said to the beast: "I want her not." But—but she had saved him! If he had not been held back—! And Anita fell to crying softly.

Poor man! A pagan chino for cook, when he loved the Spanish dishes so! Never mind! Sunday he should have his heart's content of albondigas, tamales, chiles rellenos, enchil—ay Dios! And she sprang up, dried her eyes hastily, and was off to the kitchen again.

"Sunday is three days," she whispered. "And only a chino cook till then! I will make some enchiladas for him, this very now, and send them up by Pepito." And aloud: "Is there corn meal?"

Lupe grunted disdainfully, as one whose housekeeping has been impugned. "How not? Have I not been on my blessed knees all the beforenoon at the metate, milling it? But what wilt thou, headstrong?"

"And wet chile ground?" asked Anita, paying no attention to the reproof. "What will I? Enchiladas, pues!" and she caught the old woman by the pudgy hands, and tripped a measure of the cradle waltz before Lupe could

extricate herself to go mumbling off for the desired staples. So he remembered enchiladas of the year of her birth? Pobrecito! But he should remember these enchiladas longer yet, please God!

Anita rolled up the calico sleeves over taper arms, and stirred the corn meal with "just so much" water and a skillful thumb-and-finger of salt. "The tortillas thin," she commanded Lupe; "and have a care that they burn not anywhere. These are very particular—sabes?"

While the crone patted out the tortillas and cooked them one by one upon the hot stone over the brasero, Anita herself fetched from the pantry a crock of crimson chile, and heated it. As it simmered she peeled a couple of onions, and with a heavy knife in either hand played such a tattoo upon them that they were minced before the tears were fairly off her eyes. Onion tears, only—for even as they smarted, she was crooning, "Quien sera mi caro dueno"—in the tone of one who knows full well who the "dear master" shall be.

Then she "grated" cheese with a smaller knife, and confiscated the pile of tortillas that had grown at Lupe's right hand.

"So he never can have them hot enough," she reflected, and a little twinkle came in her eye. "Pues, we will see! The seeds are all here—it ought—oyes, Lupe!" And she laughed aloud, mischievously. "Where are the chiltepines?" "A dio!" snorted the old woman impatiently; but waddled back in a moment with a handful of tiny red pods, no larger than the first joint of your little finger. Chile itself—the native red pepper of Mexico—is commonly rated as reasonably warm; but the chiltepin is sheer arson! That Aztec wit was not so slow, which christened it chile—tecpin—"flea-chile."

"I wonder if I could make him swear again?" Anita was thinking. "Ay, nana! How dr—how beautifully he swears! Holy Mother, forgive him"; and she crossed herself. "It is wicked, of course, but I could listen all day! And he couldn't help it. St. Peter himself—but so gently, too! It makes one to think of the chile, for even so was his speech—slow and cool as he passed it, but hot to take!

Would I were a man, and so might swear! Or at least that he might swear for me. Not at me—for it would kill me if he looked at me as he does then."

Tortilla after tortilla she took them up, and creased each down the middle, and dropped upon the left-hand side a heaping spoonful of the crimson sauce; and upon this a shower of the shredded cheese; and on top of that a layer of chopped raw onion. Then she doubled the six-inch pancake like an old New England "turnover," and set them all to curdle in the horno. As the savor of melting cheese arose, she turned and said to Lupe: "Now the platter—and Pepito."

But when the crone came back, ten minutes later, the pewter banged upon the table. "My Pepito, then? He was, but this house has spoiled him. Ill fare his dirty face! Here I have lost my breath with calling of him—and he, please God, off vagabonding!"

Anita dropped upon the old bench. "No Pepe to carry these precious enchiladas? And the senor superintendente hungry, beyond a doubt." She sprang up impulsively. "Oyes, mi Lupe," she said, "are we to waste such enchiladas? I will carry them myself!"

In the little eight by ten rough-board shack which was what the Bonanza Mining & Milling Co., Ltd., of Boston, gave for "home" to the man who had turned the property from an assessment to a dividend, the Professor sat upon the edge of his bunk, his chin in his hands. It tires the bravest man to face danger; and when the five o'clock whistle blew at the shaft, the superintendent was, for the first time in the history of the camp, the first man to quit. Not that he knew why. He was not thinking of that at all. Even the noseless face did not haunt him. No, not that. Two brown-black eyes, big and wet; a compelling tug at his coat; and "But he would have killed you!"—these were the moving pictures that came and went, and came again, upon the screen of his mind. And with those same slender fingers she would cook for him something he liked!

The Professor began to pace the scant room—three strides to a lap. His pistol belt lay upon the bunk, his hat upon the floor, and his eyes were half closed as he strode.

Sixty years, and alone! Why had he never realized, before, that he was alone? If a man were younger, and thought in time, and had God's grace to find one with eyes one could trust—

He was at the turn. His elbow knocked the boards as he came about on his heel—came about, and stopped even before the other foot lifted.

The door had swung open noiselessly; and on the threshold, the sunset edging it with gold, stood a huge, dark bulk.

The Professor sprang toward the bunk; but Hunks stepped one step and was between him and the six-shooter. A wicked chuckle, and he stooped with his great paws upon his knees. "Sometimes I lie," he croaked, "but not when I promise. I said it would be you and me for it, some time—and it's some time now. Come, grasshopper, I'm out for molasses!" He took mocking, mincing little steps forward, an inch at a time. His chin stood forth, his hands worked at his side; and the glow through the window flung black shadows in that hellish vacuity of his face, and lit his red eyes like coals.

"I'm a-coming," he drawled, shuffling onward by hairs' breadths. "Been thinking what a lot of good swear-words I could pick up, when I get through spilling your dam skull. The shell I'll leave for yo'r pretty greaser—uff! Yo' would, hey?"

The boxer's aim was true, the blow a crushing one; but just where the point of the jaw had been, an instant before, the Professor's fist broke upon that seared skull; and the giant hands closed upon his throat as naturally as the catcher's mitten upon a ball. There was a tremendous scuffling, for all the hundred pounds of difference; and then they came to the floor in the inevitable order.

"I told yo' I'd scrunch yo'r skull, yo' grasshopper! Jest mind how easy-like"—and Hunks lifted the grey head irresistibly, and irresistibly tapped it very gently upon the floor. "One to make ready, two to prepare," he counted drawlingly—each time drawing the helpless head up a yard, and sending it slowly back to rub with devilish significance sidewise upon the floor—"and three to—"

There was a little rustle in the door, but neither man heard it. Hunks's huge shoulders were drawn far back, till the Professor's face was almost at his chest, and the bearlike arms "gathered" for the final drive.

And just then—swish—splash. A strange, strangling splutter—a wild thrashing—a faint scream—then howls of bestial agony, and a rush of lumbering feet. Hunks burst blindly out the door—screeching, choking, screeching, digging vain fists into the crimson mask that plastered eyes and mouth and nosehole.

When the Professor began to know, she was kneeling by him; and one soft, round arm was under his neck. The other hung helpless at her side.

"What is it, child?" he asked stupidly—for his throat was black in thick lines, and his eyes were not yet done with seeing strange lights.

"Nothing," the girl answered simply. "I brought some enchiladas, for you said you liked them—and I thought it was long until Sunday. I made them very burning, too—as you said you liked. And coming to knock, I saw that beast breaking your head with the floor. Then, because there was no other way, I opened an enchilada very quickly, and clapped it upon his eyes—and held it there, tight! But perhaps he does not like my cooking," she added whimsically, "for he went away as one that is sent for. Ts!"

A shot echoed down the cañon—and then another. The Professor looked up questioningly, but Anita shook her head—"Unless it will be your foreman," she hazarded, "for he came to the door while you were still fainted, and saw what had been and departed running. Ah-h!"

The little groan struck him like a cold douche. "Are you hurt? Did he—"

"I think perhaps my arm— For at feeling the pepper in his eyes, he threw his big hands like a mill; and when I held, he twisted me the wrist. But so—he—had—had to—let go of you. No—nothing—"

The Professor was already up on his knees. He caught the drooping form and held it tight, in an agony of helplessness. It fluttered and was still—so long—so still!

But at last the soft lids lifted slowly—and suddenly fell back. For he was very close; and in his eyes!

"Anita!" the Professor whispered, bending nearer yet. "How can I thank you? If I were not an old man—"

But her eyes came wide open to him, and a soft finger was laid upon his lips. "You will never be old," she said reverently. And then, with a sudden dimple: "Rather, I think you are too young and brave to be without care. Do you not know by now that you need some one to—to—make enchiladas for you?"

THE LABOR QUESTION AT GLASSCOCK'S*

By Octave Thanet

"If you call these arrangements primitive," said my friend, the colonel, flashing his white teeth through the lint-dusted atmosphere of the cotton gin, and, with one sweep of the arm, indicating the three chambers of the mill—cotton gin, lumber mill, and grist mill—"if you are moved to your very unnecessary and impolite mirth by such little trifles as engines running without a fence around them, I wish you could have seen a mill I saw last week." Then, being properly importuned, he told me about it.

"I was riding through the bottom, after some timber I wanted to look at, with a view to selling, and somehow I lost my way. I came out on a new clearing. I never had seen it before, or the fence about the thrifty garden, or the house of lumber, built tight, and three-fourths painted, with a man on a ladder, slapping the yellow paint on the battened walls; or the shed of a mill on the river bank, under a great water oak. Not a wisp of smoke drifted out of the rusty stovepipe that was the mill chimney. There wasn't a sound, either, except the calls of the birds and the cheeping of a crowd of chickens in the front yard.

"I hailed the man, and he got his neck and one shoulder around far enough to stare at me.

" 'That a mill?' says I.

" 'Used to be, yesterday,' says he.

" 'Sell me some meal for my horse?'

" 'No, sir. All out, and ain't runnin'.'

" 'What's the matter?'

" 'Crew on a strike.'

" 'What's the matter with them?'

"The man deliberately hooked his pail over the ladder, and leisurely descended. He was a long, gaunt old fellow,

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well grizzled, and his tough old face was scored with a network of wrinkles. His gray beard had a close curl to it, as had his silky gray hair, and his blue eyes twinkled in a half shrewd, half humorous way that was rather prepossessing. He was clean, too, which is a distinction in some parts of this country. 'Obstinate as the devil,' I said to myself, 'but most likely honest, and knows a joke when he sees one.' I knew he was fixing to tell me the whole story the minute he swung off from the ladder.

" 'Set down,' said he; 'mought as well res' you' hoss a spell; hot day today, and mussiful man's mussiful to his beastis, ye know. Have drink er muscadine cider?'

"He brought a drink that came out of a stone jug slung in the well, and tasted cool and pleasant. In return, I handed him a cigar; and we were at once on most amicable terms. 'Yes,' he resumed, ' 'tis kinder embarrassin'; Saturday comin' on tomorrer, and most like folks comin' round fer meal, to be fixed this here way; an' I tole the widder so, but thar warn't no movin' of her.'

" 'The widow?'

" 'Yes, sir'—he had one of the soft, slurring voices that you don't hear out of the South, voices that linger on the vowels, and let the consonants get along by themselves; for my part I like to hear our people talk, just for the sound of it—'yes, sir, the widder, my wife. Nice a woman as you'll ever meet up with, and good a cook, tew, but the Lord made most wimmen fools, and all on 'em stubborn. And once git her set, thar ain't no movin' of the widder. So here I be, with nothin' but my own cookin' to depend on, an' mill shut down.'

"You mean your wife and you have parted?' said I, using the common expression of the country.

" 'Parted be damned!' bawled he, firing instantly, 'parted nothin'! Didn't I tell you she ben on the strike?'

" 'And your mill crew also?'

" 'Well, stranger,' was his sardonic comment, 'you don't look nigh as dumb as ye be. Bless ye, *she* air the crew!'

" 'The mill crew?'

" 'Yes, sir, the plumb crew; how much of a crew do you expect?'

" 'Aren't you a little short-handed?'

" 'Course we ain't. Come down to that mill and I'll show you. We got a daisy engine, peart as ye cud ask. I run the saw when we air a-sawin', and she pumps the bar'l full er water; and we got a inspirator to draw it into the engine, and when we used that up we stop and fire her up agin. She pumps the water and chops up the slabs that I saw off fur the engine; and I run the saw or the grist. Every feller that comes dips his own sack full out of the box and feeds the huller, tew; so we don't have nare trouble. We didn't—tell she struck.'

" 'Why did she strike?'

" 'Well, it warn't fur wages, ezackly, nor it warn't agin the union—natchelly not, seein' we air the union ourselves. What ruined our fambly is just cravin' fur style and show, and the natchell yearnin' of wimmen to have their own way. We'd of been married thirty-three year come next September, and we hain't never had no 'casion fer havin' a house paintid, when she got it inter her head, or Susan Ma'y put it thar, that she wanted a paintid house. She tole me of a Sunday that she'd ben dwellin' on the idee fur a right smart.'

" 'Ye best ondwell, then,' says I. 'Paint air onhealthy, and I don't want none er it in mine.' ' 'Tain't neither,' says she; 'the cholera is comin', and the doctors say paint—fresh paint—is a perventative,' says she, terrible uppish. But it warn't no perventative she ben ayfter. It ben fur the looks of the thing, and I knowed it. Ye see, the widder allus had a hankerin' fur fine things. We ain't got no less'n four rockin' cheers to our house. Fact. And she won't w'ar a sunbunnit to church. Got to have a bunnit or a straw hat. An' she kinder tolled me inter paintin' an' paperin' inside tell we was so dadgummed fine she cudn't have my ole dog inside in muddy weather. 'Clare that made me mad. An' what made me madder, she had to git a stove in the room, an' I hadn't nare place on earth to spit in 'cept a box! What do you reckon 'bout that? Air that the way to treat a self-respectin' citizen with a white skin—makin' of him spit in a box? Oh, it air all Susan Ma'y, her daughter—I knows her. She married a man ain't got no notions 'cept to please her! Dretful fool's ye ever did see! Makes a

heap er money runnin' a mill, an' got a house fer her made outer a book. Yes, sir, I seen it in the book. Gits things fur his mill outer a book, tew. Has high's fifteen men foolin' with that mill, an' lumber ain't planed a bit better'n mine. Got a cotton gin on it, and grinds corn, tew.'

"It was plain his disapproval of his son-in-law struggled with pride in his possessions; but I had seen that sort of thing before, and I knew enough to keep my mouth shut. He went on describing the glories of Susan Ma'y's house and yard. She had a carpet with roses on it, and china vases, and a clock, and a gold watch, and curtains in the windows, and lamps with white shades over the chimneys made it light as day all night. 'And she puts the widder up to all manner er nonsense,' he concluded, ferociously.

" 'That's your stepdaughter, I suppose,' said I, to keep the conversation brisk, and get the old man in the humor to let me get some meal, somehow, for my horse. The poor beast had the lampers, and needed soft food.

" 'Stepdaughter!' said he, sharply; 'no, she ain't; widder an' me ain't never ben married, 'cept to each other.'

" 'Oh, it was only from her being called Mrs.—, your wife's daughter, and you calling your wife the widow,' I hazarded.

" 'That's 'cause she favors her maw, an' ain't got nare sense like me,' he snarled back. 'Ain't you never heard married folks talk afore? An' I calls her the widder, 'cause if I was to die she wud be the widder Glasscock, wudn't she? An' she mought ez well begin to hear it. We ain't got nare nother child nor Susan Ma'y, neither. Now you got us straight in you' mind, stranger?'

" 'I reckon,' said I.

" 'Well, so ye have, I kin go on to the p'int. We kep' at it. She ben wantin' of me to take a paper, "so we'll know the news," says she. I says, "We ain't no need er news, 'cept what we kin git oncet a month, at preachin'," but I says, when this come up, "If I'll git ye a paper oncet a week will ye quit bellerin' at me?" Says she, "I dunno how to b'ar hit without we git the house paintid." "Ye cayn't have the house paintid," says I, "but I'll git ye the paper." And I done got her the paper. And she read it to me reg'lar.

She kin read the best in the world, right off; nev' does have to stop an' spell, not even to whisper words off to herseff. An' she use to read all 'bout them strikes an' sich—reckon ye know on 'em?'

" 'I've heard,' said I.

" 'Kinder fool things, to my notion, but she got dredful struck by 'em. An' she kep' at me 'bout the paint—axed me twicet in one week—"Say, Squire, ain't you goin' to paint?" —jest like that, mighty fine an' mincin'. "No, I ain't," says I; "you quit you' foolin' 'bout paint or I'll quit you!"—jest like that, awful stern an' determined. I 'lowed it wud shet her up. Sayd it to her twicet. Fust time she didn't say nary, jest taken a bite on her snuff stick, an' santered off. Nex' time she says, right low an' pleasant, "Say, Squire, if I was to pay fur the paint wud it make ary differ in you' feelin's?" "You ain't got nare money," says I, fur I knowed she done spent ever' last cent she got from her chickens on a colt she bought fur me ter go ridin'. His countenance wore the queerest expression over the last sentence; I believe he wanted to convey to me, without telling, that his rebellious wife really did, as we call it down here, set a heap of store by him. He went on, scraping the dried paint off the palms of his hands as he talked, with his finger nails, ' "You ain't got nare money." I sayd that. "How come ye cayn't let me work it out at the mill," says she. "I isn't to pay you fur workin' to the mill," says I; "I never did pay ye one cent." "Time ye begun, then," says she, "fur I don't 'low to strike nary nuther lick ter the mill tell ye gives me you' word 'bout that ar paint." "Oh, you' goin' to strike, be ye?" says I. "All right fur you." And I went home, mad. I cudn't someway b'ar to be beat by her cussedness, and I kep' a-turnin' an' a-turnin' it over, an' studyin' 'bout it, an' I reckon I got madder an' madder, fur to tell ye the hones' truth, stranger, I ben fixin' ter give in to that ar fool woman, seein' how she did work so good ever' other way; an' fact is, I had bought that ar paint to the store, leastways I had priced it, an' I lowed if she begged right hard I cud ride over an' git it, nex' mornin', mud not bein' more'n shoe-mouth deep, nowhar, an' road good. So, natchelly, that made me all the madder, me

meanin' so well by her, an' her cuttin' up rough that away, an' doin' me so mean! So—we was out to the paschure—we all got a right fine paschure an' some mighty nice cows—an' she ben a milkin' when I named the matter to her—so I jest lit out an' leff her a-milkin'. Didn't offer to holp tote the pails or nothin'; jest went a-streakin' back with my mad up! Say, stranger, you married?'

"I said I was so fortunate.

" 'Well, then,' and he rolled the scrapings of paint into a ball in the hollow of his palms and gave a sigh of relief, 'then you know thar ain't nare critter on earth kin make ye madder nor you' wife, an' looks like the more ye think on her, the madder she kin rile ye. I ben that mad I cudn't see straight; an' when, as I turned away, all choked up, I heerd the swish, splash, of the milk drappin' into the pail, steady like, an' knowed she hadn't turned a ha'r fur all my r'arin' an' chargin'—looked like I wanted to spite her wuss'n I ever did want anything! But I turns 'round, an' I sayd, "Mistress Glasscock," says I, "tomorrer is Saturday, an' thar is like to be ten men, maybe, 'long here to have their corn ground. Do you mean to tell me ye won't holp me with them men a-grindin'?" "I mean I done struck," says she, "like them men you read on. You knows on what terms I'll come back—the house prommussed to be paintid." An' she went at the cow agin, swish, splash. "All right fur you!" says I. And I never did turn my head on her agin, but I walked right spang home, and I went in, an' I nailed a bar agin all three er the doors, an' then I got the kettle an' the coffee-pot on the stove an' went out an' cut some meat an' got it a-sizzlin,' an' I sot down. D'reckly I heerd her a-comin'. Then she tried the door. We didn't have nare locks nur bolts on the doors, an' I 'lowed she mistrustid; but I set dumb's a wil' hog when ye stick him. One by one, she tried ever' last door. Then she spoke. "What is you aimin' to do, Sam Glasscock?" says she, kinder flustered like, an' I answered back, "You' mighty sharp, Mistress Glasscock, but you cayn't cut me. I read the papers, tew. If you' a-strikin', I'm a-lockin' ye out. That ar's what I air aimin' at, Mistress Glasscock." '

"He paused to let me appreciate the impressiveness of

his retort, and flung the little ball of paint at a hen that had strayed into the garden and was nibbling at the rows of peas.

" 'What did she say?' said I.

"He sighed heavily, and said: 'She jest kinder laughed, right spiteful like, an', ayfter a plumb minnit, endurin' wich she hadn't made nare sound er rattlin' the winders, nur poundin' on the doors, nur nary, she sayd: "Sam, if ye want to fix it that a way, you kin; but when ye want me back, remember I ain't a comin', less'n to a paintid house." She nev' did say nuthin' more. I waited on her to speak, 'cause I ben gettin' kinder cooled off, but I didn't hear nuthin', an' bymeby, when I come to look out'—he got up, frowned and shook himself as a dog will, you know, before he concluded—'well, that's all; she were plumb gone!'

"Somehow, for all his bravado, I guessed that it had hurt him.

"In a moment or two, he went on his plaint, with his back to me: 'We all ben man an' wife fur thirty-three year, an' we ain't never did ben apart a night before; an' it ben ever' mite her fault, I tole myself. But I reckon I hadn't orter locked her out. Hey, stranger?'

" 'I reckon you would have done better to have let her in and talked it over peaceably,' said I.

" 'You reckon I best paintid the house fer her?' It was comical, the way he flung those sentences over his shoulder at me, never once turning around.

" 'Can you afford it?'

" 'Course I kin.'

" 'Hasn't she been a good wife to you, every other way?'

" 'Ain't I done tole ye that? Nobody in this yere kentry has got a better woman than me.'

"Still he kept his broad back to me; but his shoulder wriggled at each question.

" 'You'd better give in, then,' said I.

"He exploded in a second, flung himself round on me, swinging his fists and snorting, swelling like an enraged hen.

" 'Give in,' he screamed, 'you bet I won't give in! I

ain't that kind er man—I ain't! Why, look a here, I found out better'n that by the papers. Ain't she struck?'

" 'Surely,' said I.

" 'Ain't I done locked her out?'

" 'So it appears,' said I.

" 'Well,' triumphantly he spread his hands apart, glistening with paint, 'what do they do in the papers in these yere contests atween labor an' capitil? Is labor—that's her—goin' to give in? Not much; it ain't got the sense! Is capitil—that's me—goin' to lay down? Never!'—he slapped his painted jeans with a sounding thud with both hands—'Well, how is you to manage? How does them great contestin' pyarties manage? Why, *nobuddy* gives in. They finds somebody they kin have confidence in, an' they leaves it to him, an' both on 'em will abide by his decidin'.'

" 'I see,' said I, gravely, 'and I—'

" 'You air the arbitration committee an' don't you ferget it. You decide fur paint, paint it is!'

"I ventured to suggest that he had started on the paint before the committee decided. His foot was already on the last round of the ladder and his hand outstretched to unhook the pail; but he cast a withering glance at me. 'Stranger,' he remarked, in a low, impressive voice, 'I done lived on my own cookin' ever sence last Friday week; an' does you reely reckon I air goin' to monkey round yere, waitin' on a arbitration committee an' doin' nuthin'? No, sir. I knowed aforehand what a decent arbitrationer wud say, an', wilst I ben waitin' fur one to come by, I jest laid the paint on lively. It'll be all on afore sundown, this evenin', an' I kin git to Susan Ma'y, my daughter's, afore long; an' the widder has jest natchelly got to submit to the arbitrationer, tew, an' come 'long home; an' ef the fraish paint makes her plumb sick, 'tain't nare fault er mine!'

"So saying, he addressed himself so vigorously to his painting that I rather felt myself in the way. However, I interrupted him long enough to inquire my road, and then I took it, since corn meal, under the present strained relations of labor and capital at Glasscock's, seemed out of reach. I had not gone very far before I came upon what we call a hack, that is, a spring wagon, drawn by a very

good pair of horses, and driven by a young woman much better dressed than one will often see on a country road. Beside her sat a little, wiry, meek-faced old woman in a sunbonnet. I didn't need to see them turn down the cross-road to Glasscock's to make out that there had been some sort of an arbitration committee for the party of the second part, also.

"I lodged that night not far from the mill, and in the morning I rode back to it. The smokestack was puffing away. Outside, a small figure, in a short blue gown, was swinging an ax with a most extraordinary agility. It was the crew of the mill, evidently, going to work with that zeal which is always mentioned in the newspapers, after a strike ends. The mill itself, on nearer approach, turned out to be a mere shell. There was a funny little engine, and, sure enough, there was the barrel and the pump and the inspirator; and as soon as the barrel was pumped full the engine could start up. While I halted my horse and looked through one side (it had all one side open, so no doors were needed), the whistle blew and the engineer began to pump; in no time the mill started up.

"Within the grist mill, there was a pile of corn on the floor, and old Glasscock was shoveling corn into the box of the sheller. The corn cobs poured out at one end and the sheller corn came in a more or less jerky stream from the middle. Glasscock, at intervals, would stop shoveling and kick the pile of corn away from the mouth of the sheller. Presently, the water barrel being emptied, the mill shut down. While the mill crew heaped slabs into the furnace, the miller sifted the corn through a clumsy wire seive and then put it into the funnel above the buhr stones. He threw off the belt from the sheller and set the grist mill going; and, as soon as the wheezing of the desultory little engine was heard, the meal began to come snowing out of the funnel below. There was a box ready to receive it, and this box he emptied into the barrel, standing near.

"Noticing my horse's shadow on the floor, he glanced up. He beckoned to me to approach. 'That's her!' he said, dropping his voice and gazing with undisguised pride and satisfaction on the busy little figure; 'ain't she a terror to

work? Ain't it worth arbitratin' a leetle to git sech a crew back? An' she don't put on no airs. She done begged my pardon, right humble. Wudn't mad me fur nuthin', now. Don't she keep a movin' peart, though? Sayd she nev' would say paint to me, agin. This yere eggsperience done humbled her shore—plumb humbled her!'

"He dwelt with such unction on the words, and she did seem so mild a creature, that I began to wonder where the victory in the present contest between labor and capital really belonged. Wondering I departed, although they pressed me to stay, and I began to see then a lively gratitude on the part of Mrs. Glasscock that has given me many a frying chicken since. Just as I was leaving, old Glasscock sidled up to me. 'Say,' he muttered, 'most like you'll be goin' by the store at the cross roads; say, tell 'em to mix me up another batch er that paint. It'll be time fur the second coat next week!' "

THE FIRST GRAIN MARKET*

By Edward Everett Hale

The girl sang cheerily, as she took her place in the canoe:

"The squirrel said 'chee' to the wood-thrush,
The wood-thrush said 'whee' to the squirrel,
And the sun rose.
The squirrel hid in the bark,
And the wood-thrush flew to the south,
But the sun rose,"

And, sure enough, as she sang, the first bright line of the sun's disk could be seen above the horizon's edge.

She pointed to it gayly.

The boy was evidently more fond of his sister than we are taught to believe is the habit of these people. And it was clear that she knew how to make him fond of her. She sat in the bow of her canoe, now humming the refrain of her song, if it may be called so, and, once and again, when he asked her, singing such words as she fancied at the moment. All the time, with split porcupine quills, she was embroidering for him an ornament for the handle of a canoe paddle. The quills of different colors lay in the lap of her deerskin coat, and the quaint, simple pattern came out, to his delight, more and more plainly, as she sang and as he paddled the boat along.

The canoe had been lying in a little ditch, cut for the purpose in the black mud of the bank of what we should now call a slough. They pushed out under the heavy shade of the canebrake, upon the waters of the motionless lake, which had, in fact, been left by the river, in an old change of levels, but was still three or four feet deep. The surface was covered in some places by large, round, green shields, the leaves of lotuses, and both boy and girl looked curiously for the great seed-vessels. Now and then, as they

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shot by, he cut off a ripe head with the copper knife which hung at his belt. He would toss the very ripest to her, and she would open the great cup and shake out the seeds, to crack and nibble as they sailed. On the velvety surface of the great, green leaves of the plants were round diamond drops, beautiful as if they had indeed come from Golconda.

Close before them, on the dull surface of the lake, were thousands upon thousands of water birds, quite indifferent to the neighborhood of the voyagers until the boat was close upon them. Then one and another, perhaps a hundred at a time, would rise, always facing the wind. It seemed for a moment as if they ran across the surface of the water till there was momentum enough, if joined with the movement of the wind in the opposite direction, to lift the bird into the air. It was precisely as a boy runs with his kite, to give it, by his earthly running, a chance to fly. The air once caught, the bird stopped the motion of its web feet, and the wings lifted it on its way, long streams of white foam following after the fugitives, the babble of which was like the babble of a mountain stream. The boy pushed his canoe along through lilies, lily-pads, lotus leaves and the bubbles left by the escape of birds, and two or three minutes of such rapid paddling as his brought them both into the very heart of the great plantation (shall one call it?) of wild rice, to which he had promised to bring her.

The exquisite plants rose above the girl's head, even when she stood in the canoe, four, even five, times as high as she was. The wild rice can hardly be described to one who has not seen it, so delicate and fine are the highest stems, each bearing a beautiful chandelier of the blossoms and of the ripened fruit. A leaf of delicate green hangs right and left from a round stem as green, and on the very top stem of all are clustered the long spikes of rice, daintiest of food for ducks and teal, and not to be despised by men.

The girl clapped her hands as she saw how plenteous was the harvest, and, in joyful smiles, she expressed her pleasure to her brother. Into the mouth of the smallest and narrowest creek which can be conceived, he drove the boat. She helped him, by pulling hard at the stems of rice on the right hand and the left, until they were completely

embosomed in it, he at his end and she at hers. Then he took the paddle which he had been using, and, as she bent down the tall stems in a line over the boat, he beat them thoroughly. Or she herself used the paddle of which she had worked the handle, while he bent down stems for her to work upon. Then they pushed the boat farther and farther in. The ripe grains piled up upon the bottom and around their feet. It was rough harvesting, but was ample. When the boat would go no farther up that particular creek, he backed out into the lake again and found another. It was not half an hour before the canoe had all the cargo she could float, and boy and girl both sat gingerly as he turned her head homeward to her little dock, and again drove the congress of web-footed senators away. As they came into the trench which had been cut in the hard mud, the graceful girl sprang lightly ashore, but turned again, with what in opera we should call a gesture of good-by. He knew he need only wait for her a moment. Sure enough, she was back again as soon as she had time to run to the tepees and to return. And this time she was heavily laden with a great string of baskets, which she had fastened together and carried on a long hickory stick above her head. The load was indeed too heavy for her, and her brother ran up the path to help her.

"Now you see why I have been so busy all the summer, and all through the time of harvest, while the other girls have been singing and dancing and fooling away their time."

"I see that the baskets are for the rice, and I see that they will empty the canoe, but I do not see why you and I should gather rice for the others. And I do not know why we should go before the others are ready."

"The others? The others?" said she—this with a merry laugh, but with a gesture of scorn. "As if I meant to work for them! For them, indeed! Let them work for me!

"No, White-wings," and now she spoke more seriously, "none of our rice will go into their storehouse. I will do my share when the time comes, but this is not for them.

"White-wings, keep my secret. Help me build my grainhouse and cover it. Go with me two more mornings, that we may have three canoe-loads in all. Help me pack it

in the baskets—I have baskets enough—and be ready to move it when the time comes.

"White-wings, do this for me, and you shall have the white totem. You shall have the white pine tree." And the girl put her hand under her leather jacket, and drew out, hanging to a cord of deer's sinew, a round bit of silver, on one side of which was a rude image of a pine tree.

The boy knew that it was the most precious thing she had. He had coveted it as the rarest of treasures, and now she offered it to him for his own.

"White-wings," she said, "before I made the first basket I had a dream. I dreamed that six black swans,—oh, so large!—would come down the lake shore. And in the dream they stopped and bent their long necks, all of them, where I stood. And I knew they wanted rice, and I gave them rice, and the tallest swan of all gave to me a kernel of yellow corn.

"I waked from my dream, and that morning I began to make my baskets, that I might have the grain ready for the swans when they should come.

"And I dreamed another dream. This time there came six blue herons, and they bent their long necks as they stood on their long legs. And I gave each of them a fish, and they flew away. Then I worked all the harder, that I might me ready for the herons when they came.

"And three nights ago I dreamed again. And this time six red deer came running from the east. And they were not afraid of me. They came and nibbled grains of ripe rice from my hand. And I woke up when I felt their cold noses on my fingers.

"That time I came to you, and my good brother has helped me to fill the baskets."

As she talked they filled the baskets with the ripe grain, and carried them where they could cover them with corn leaves, under an old willow. In hard work for the rest of that day they palisaded them stoutly, and made their inclosure so secure that it was safe from rabbits. Of deer, so near the tepees, there was no danger.

* * * *

Carefully did the Indian girl watch the sun, morning, noon and night, as the days grew shorter. She had driven

a long peg into a cottonwood tree, as high as she could, and, day by day, on the ground, she made her mark at noon, when the shadow was the shortest. At last she summoned her brother. "See, White-wings, see! The mark was here three days ago, and, see, now the shadow is here—so much shorter. They will come soon."

Every morning at sunrise, while the village was still at its laziest, the girl had, for a week before this, climbed to her eyrie in her own selected bare cottonwood tree, to be sure that no one escaped her eye upon the larger lake. It was near a mile's walk for her every day through the prairie, but she never hesitated. Snow, rain, ice or sunshine, it was all one for her.

And the very next day after she showed to White-wings the telltale shadow which proved that the days were growing longer, she was rewarded in her outlook. Far to the north, on the quiet lake, which was still not frozen, were one, two, three—more specks than she could surely count. She hardly waited to count them, indeed, so eager was she to find her brother, and to bring him to the shore.

It was not an hour before they were both there. They built a fire, of which the smoke curled above them. They stood out on the bank, hardly high enough to be called a bluff, and, with tall canes, the tallest they could cut, waved signals of welcome; signals which were readily discerned in that white, flat wilderness.

Within an hour or two more, the strange canoes drew near, in two lines. The strangers also waved signals of recognition, and the leading boat ran fearlessly up to the shore. Robert Cavelier de La Salle landed, and freely took the offered hand of White-wings, the boy, who knew already that such was the white man's signal of welcome.

For Waketa, she had been recognized, on the moment, by a tall, well-built, handsome Indian of the leading crew. He was one of the eighteen Massachusetts Indians whom La Salle took, with their squaws and papooses, because they had been to the Mississippi before.

The girl looked gladly up in the face of the tall stranger, welcomed his expression of eager joy, looked up again and smiled, as any man might be glad to have such a woman smile on him.

"Yes, I knew you would come. And I knew you would come today.

"My dream said that when the sun was four days toward the south the six black swans would come, the six white herons would come, the six deer would come. And today is the fourth day, and you are here."

"And where is the token?" asked her admirer, proud of the eager eyes and curious gaze of those who looked on.

The girl looked down a minute, and hesitated. "Which was best, Waban? Which was best? He has the token. It is safe; no one else has it. I am sure," she said proudly, "you do not fear me.

"Waban, I knew that you were coming. I knew you would not come alone. I knew six canoes would come with you, for I saw six swans, six herons and six deer in my dream. Waban, we are ready for you. Tell the black chief that we are ready." And she pointed to Cavelier de La Salle.

Then White-wings and Waban, in a mixture of the Winnebago language and French and English, explained to the great leader that the village was but a mile back behind the canebrake. He readily accepted the invitation to a feast which, in his father's name, White-wings gave him. Taking two of the whites of his party, Waban, and the three babies and their mothers, La Salle followed his guides to the encampment, and, with his own civility, received the hurried welcome which was offered. Stores of berries and rice and corn were brought out, fifty fish were placed upon the coals, and a sudden feast of welcome was improvised.

And Waketa took her lover, and led him to her palisade, and showed him the hard-packed baskets of rice which she and her brother had made ready. Waban, delighted with her foresight, ran back and called the great chief.

It was hard to explain to La Salle that this welcome store of provision was thus all ready for his winter passage across to the Mississippi.

When, in three languages, the story of her dreams was told to him, he held his hand over her, and blessed her and hers.

"Dominus tibi benedicet, filia mea." It was a Christmas blessing.

And from his pouch he took a Portuguese joe of gold, ten pine-tree shillings, and placed them in the hand of the girl, compelling her to take them, though she would gladly have shrunk away.

For this little story there is, alas, no written authority. But if it can ever be authenticated, here is the record of the oldest harvest, and that of the first sale on the corn exchange.

And thus was consecrated that Christmas Day.

THE MILL ON THE KOP*

By Robert Barr

The sun beat with tropical fierceness on the mill, for it was midsummer; in other words, Christmas Day. The German miller sat in the shade to the south of his mill, and smoked a long pipe he had brought from the Rhine, years ago. His son Hans, a boy of fourteen, wandered near by restless and dissatisfied. The Germans make much of Christmas, and the boy had been promised high jinks, whereas here was nothing going on, with a day so hot that his father refused to move from the shadow of his mill, and would not even answer the protests of the youth, save by a grunt.

Yacob Steiner, the miller, was a veteran of the Franco-Prussian War, who had seen stout fighting in his day, and thought he was entitled to his rest. He had had enough of battle to last him as long as he might live, and thus had settled in a country where he knew there would be no wars, far removed as it was from all European complications. So he built himself a windmill for the grinding of grain, a solid stone structure after the German fashion, on the top of a kopje, probably the only one of its kind in all South Africa. Stone being plentiful, the mill was strongly constructed of this material, and glass being scarce, there was none in the windows, which were merely narrow upright slits in the walls, numerous to make up for their lack of width, giving the stodgy mill the appearance of a castle turret, loop-holed for bowshot practice, such as Steiner had often seen in the Old Country. On the top of the tower was the wooden movable circular platform that supported the four clumsy arms and great sails of the motive power, a hood with a great, long, wooden lever sloping downward

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that enabled Yacob, with much labor, to move the turntable that the sails might face the wind.

The mill would have proved a disastrous commercial speculation for a man of almost any other nationality, for the custom was scant. The Dutch round about ground their own mealies, mortar and pestle style, with an uncomplaining Kafir as the motor, so Yacob came to little profit by his advent among them; still the mill was his home, and if there was little to grind he needed little to eat. The tax collector knew him not, so there were elements of quiet happiness in his existence. Besides this he was a brave man, taking with equanimity whatever came. He had been through terrible battles in his youth, had been married three times in his more mature years, and now with old age creeping along, lived contented with his pipe and his youngest son, the final wife having followed her predecessors. Elder sons, in Cape Town and Durban, sent him a little money now and then, and thus Yacob considered himself extremely well off. His first pride was his mill, which he had built with his own hands, and his second, his younger son, who, unfortunately, was anxious to get off to the outer world which produced real money that his elder brothers were sharing.

The view southward from the mill was wild and extensive; that to the north even more so. A stranger to the scene would have said that there was no human habitation in sight, but the accustomed eyes of the miller saw several, with even a village possessing a name that rolled from the Dutch tongue like lumps of granite down a slope. To the sky line extended range upon range of low, rugged hills. Over all brooded deep silence and the fervid heat of the strong sun.

The old man had heard little of the war then going on in some remote parts of the land, but what he had heard was entirely to his satisfaction. The British were being driven into the sea, which was only what he had expected, for he knew that no nation could fight except his own. Commandeering had respected the age of the miller and the youth of his son, and had therefore passed them by. Aside from this he had no horse, depending for transit on his sturdy

German legs, and in this he differed greatly from his Dutch neighbors. He was grateful for his exemption, and it never occurred to him that no one had a right to commandeer him, because his mill stood on British ground and his neighbors were technically British subjects. This, apparently, had not occurred to them either, for the British sovereignty was but a vague abstraction, and, although their votes had elected members of a colonial legislature, they were all as one in hating the "rooneks" and firm in the belief that, when the proper time came, the Dutch Afrikander would sweep the enemy from the land. Herr Steiner, too, hated the English in a mild sort of way, and before the war broke out had readily consented to make his remote mill an arsenal, where stacks of the most modern repeating rifles and boxes of small cartridges were stowed in the revolving turret, free from all chance of espionage, to be left till called for. A number of these rifles and a quantity of ammunition had been taken away when his neighbors went to the front, and he was pleased to learn that they had done good service; that the Boers won victories without the loss of a man, and that the enemy were being slaughtered wholesale.

"Father, are you going to the village?" asked Hans, in German.

"It is too hot to go to the village," answered his father, serenely.

"Then may I go to the village alone? It is not too hot for me," persisted the boy.

"There is nothing to see at the village. All the men are gone to the war, and there will be no more Christmas at the village than here at the mill."

"But you promised we would have Christmas at the mill, or go to the village," continued the boy, with tears of disappointment in his eyes.

"Yaw, yaw," said the miller with sleepy indifference, "but I change my mind. I tell you it is too hot." And regarding this as final, the miller resumed his smoking.

Hans gazed in silent, tearful dissatisfaction across the rolling, broken country toward the south. Life is full of compensations, but the boy did not know this, so the fact brought no consolation to him. Nevertheless he was to have

a practical illustration, and in a short time all his disappointment was forgotten. From the top of a distant kopje rose a column of white smoke, and presently across the intervening landscape came the subdued thunder of a cannon. Even the old German became alert, and rose to his feet. More than a quarter of a century had passed since he had seen cannon smoke, and the sound of the gun roused an echo in his heart that had long been asleep. Surprise so overpowered him that he took his pipe from his mouth, a most unusual occurrence. Another cloud of smoke lifted itself in the air; another boom smote the ear after an interval.

"It is a battle!" cried the boy, quivering with excitement.

"Naw," said his father slowly. "They are practicing only. That is why they use the old powder. If it was a battle they would be firing smokeless powder."

But it seemed the old man was mistaken. Suddenly from the top of the kopje appeared smoke of a different color; then came the tearing sound of a bursting shell. The aim had not been accurate, for the shell struck some distance to the left, overshooting the mark, and, far away as it was, father and son could plainly see, through the clear air, the havoc the projectile had wrought among the shrubs and bushes on the northern side of the slope where it fell and burst. Again the white smoke and the boom; then the green smoke and the crash, this time nearer to the hilltop, but still overshot.

"The fools!" shouted old Steiner, warming up, "where is the smokeless powder they boasted of? They are setting up a target of smoke for the rooneks."

The artillery duel continued, the rooneks sending their shells nearer and nearer to the mark, until two fell in quick succession right on the spot where the white cloud was first seen, and now, having got the range, destruction reigned on the hilltop. No more clouds of white smoke went up, and black dots like minute ants could be seen scuttling down the northern slopes.

"They are thrashed," growled the miller. "Their gun is disabled, and will be captured."

But modern warfare seemed determined to contradict all the old veteran surmised. To his amazement, the boom of the cannon continued, although no smoke was seen. At last, however, it ceased, and in place of it came the incessant, faint, sharp rattle of the rifles. Still the shell explosions desolated the top of the ridge.

"Oh father! What is that?" shouted the boy, pointing downward and to the left. The old man gazed in the direction indicated by his son. Twenty or thirty spans of laboring oxen were slowly hauling a long, black cannon toward the north. Some hundreds of men on ponies galloped hither and thither, apparently urging the drivers of the oxen to greater speed. Steiner rubbed his eyes in amazement. How came the cannon from that direction? It had evidently not been on the ridge where havoc was making its playground. Its line of progress was well chosen. The retreating force kept kopjes between it and all possible observers on the hills to the south. It was a retreat conducted with masterly skill. Slowly the elongated chain of oxen dragged its heavy burden along the bottom edge of the concealing slope, then down into a water course, and here they got into trouble; but a trouble that no human foresight could have avoided. The river had to be crossed, but the heavy cannon sank down into its sands and there stuck. The motive centipede swayed now to the right, now to the left, but could not budge the burden of steel. The ox-train of ammunition was blocked on the farther bank, by the stalling of the great gun. One horseman galloped up the slope until nearly at the hilltop, and there dismounting, cautiously, himself unseen, reconnoitered the enemy. The futile bombardment of the empty crest was still raging, farther to the south. The spy signaled to his comrades below. Still the cannon remained immovable. A party of horsemen detached themselves from the main column and galloped swiftly along the valley, disappearing from view to the left of the mill hill.

"The rooneks are wasting much good ammunition," said the German sagely, "and valuable time."

Nevertheless, the Boers were in a hole, in every sense of the phrase, and they knew it. The commando had dismounted, their ponies standing in a clump, ready for instant

use, while their riders tried ineffectually, with lever and rope, to move the stubborn gun, the Kafir-beaten oxen straining at the chains.

There was a clatter of hoofs on the rocky plateau behind the mill, and Steiner went round to learn the cause. He found himself in the midst of the detachment that had come north from the main body. On reaching the top their leader cast an anxious eye to the south, and was relieved to see the play of the lyddite on the far-away ridge.

"Have you any oxen?" asked the leader.

"Nein," replied Steiner.

"Are there any at the village beyond?"

"Yaw. Plenty."

"You will hold the mill," said the leader to his men. "Knock stones out of the wall, so that you can fire on the British as soon as they appear on the ridge."

"There is no need to knock stones out," said Steiner. "There are slits enough in the walls for twice as many men as you have here."

"Good. As soon as the British are in sight, fire on them as fast as possible, to keep them in check till we get the gun away. Begin firing at once close over the kopje; it may hinder them."

The commander sprang on his pony and galloped down the slope toward the village. His men estimated the range, and rained Mauser bullets in the direction of the unseen foe. The explosions on the crest had ceased, but the vapor still hung in a low cloud over it. The gun remained immovable in the slough, but by and by there appeared from the north a large drove of oxen, rapidly nearing the party by the river.

Now the sharp-eyed Boers in the mill saw a commotion on the distant hilltop. A flag had been planted on the crest. The enemy had charged the kopje and had found there nothing but a shell-swept ridge. The Boers fired volley after volley. Two of their number had gone along the uplands, keeping well out of sight, and, a quarter of a mile away, were exploding loose charges of black powder on the rocks, raising clouds of smoke, deluding the enemy into the idea that from this point were coming the bullets that

poured from the mill. In the shelter another Boer was calmly making coffee over a fire he had kindled. Far below, the re-enforcement of oxen had been attached to the muzzle of the long cannon, and now they were rolling it, like a log, up out of the mud. In spite of the hail of bullets, the enemy were seen coming down the distant slope into the plain below. If they turned to the left they would still be in time to capture the gun, unless the force around it made a stand and held them off.

At this critical juncture the Boers in the mill ceased firing, and deserted their stronghold. Each drank down a boiling cup of coffee, and made for his pony. In vain the German tried to rally them. Now was the time to shoot, he cried. The British were forming line on the plain below the kopje, as if to give an expert rifleman every advantage. It was throwing away the blessings of Providence to retreat at this time, pleaded Steiner; but his visitors paid not the slightest attention to him. They leaped on their nags and galloped away, leaving the miller and his son alone with the deserted fortress. Steiner swore mouth-filling German oaths. All his military instincts were roused. The rooneks must be kept back at all costs.

"Up into the loft, Hans," he cried, "and bring down rifles and ammunition."

The eager boy needed no second bidding. He brought down a heavy sheaf of rifles, then a heavy box of cartridges. While he went for more, Yacob loaded magazine after magazine and sighted the weapons for the estimated distance. Threescore of rifles were speedily at his side, with more ammunition than he could fire in two days.

"Now, Hans, take the black powder and go along the ridge to where those Dutchmen fired it off. Get up a cloud of smoke and watch the mill. When I wave a flag at the west window, run to me. You saw what the Dutchmen did?"

"Yes, yes," cried the boy, and was off like a flash, keeping out of sight as the Boers had done.

And now the long dormant lust of fighting gleamed from the German's eye. He lifted rifle after rifle to the slit in the wall, and with incredible rapidity fired off the contents of each magazine at the line of troops. The effect was

Drawn by Frank X. Leyendecker.

"The Boers fired volley after volley."

soon evident. The phalanx separated into atoms, and the atoms broke back to cover. For a while Steiner had it all his own way. There was no reply to his attack, but he kept on firing at the apparently empty slope. Then a screaming shell clove the air from the hilltop, racing for the cloud of smoke far to the right of the mill. The German waved his flag from the west window, but the boy, enveloped in powder fumes of his own making, could not see the signal.

"Hans! Hans!" cried his father. But the cry was unheard, and Steiner spent a long moment of agony, such as he had never experienced when he fought the French. The shell cleared the hilltop and burst like a clap of thunder far down the valley. A second later the frightened lad emerged from his cloud, and ran like a deer for the mill. Instinct had translated for him the language of the shell. The next missile came closer, but still overshot the mark; the third landed square in the cloud of smoke, which the still air held hovering over the spot from which it had emanated. The German now tried to get the range of the cannon on the distant ridge, and sent his Mauser bullets impartially along the crest, but the shells came at stated intervals without cessation. The centipede and the Boer gun had long since gone out of sight to the east of the mill, and now had reappeared on the southern slope of the kop to the north of the village, laboring slowly up. The temporary check of the enemy had been the salvation of the cannon.

Suddenly the volcano on the southern kop became inactive and the irruption of shells ceased. The atoms emerged from the foot of the hill and dashed at a double across the plain. Steiner almost fancied he heard the echo of a cheer. They took to the right instead of to the left, and any chance of coming on the trail of the retreating cannon was lost. The invaders presently disappeared from sight among the hills, and the German, who had stood irresolute during the charge, now put down his unemptied rifle. Silence fell on the land, and the smoke of battle gradually dissipated itself into the thin, transparent air.

No trace of either combatant was to be seen within sight of the mill. "Hans," said the old man quietly, resuming his neglected pipe, "get a sheet from your bed, climb to the top of the mill and tie it on the pole."

"Is that to be our flag?" asked the boy.

"Yaw, it is our flag now."

The active boy completed his task, and the white plume hung listless from the pole. The old man gathered the embers of the outside fire and warmed the coffee that the Boers had left. Drinking some of this, the two went into the mill, the boy to clean the rifles and the father to smoke on the balcony that circled the tower, some ten feet from the ground. Here, leaning his arms on the rail, he enjoyed his long pipe and the view. The sun was now descending, and a company of men broke out from cover. The mill was outflanked, and its assailants were brought to a stand by seeing the flag of truce waving above it, the new breeze giving life to the white insignia. Halting his company, the officer stepped forward uniformed in khaki, a brown slouch hat on his head turned up at the side. He attempted a sentence in Dutch, but the German, who had not moved a muscle or shown any surprise, said quietly between puffs, "I speeks Anglish mineselef."

"Oh, do you? Well, thank goodness for that. You surrender, then?"

"Yaw, I makes derms."

"What are your terms?"

"You must spare der garrison, or we fights to der lasdt man."

"Of course we spare the garrison. We're soldiers, not assassins."

"Dot's all righdt. Und my mill musdt not be hurt."

The officer rapidly cast his eye over the mill and saw it was practically an impregnable fortress, if held by desperate and determined men. He had no desire to acquire this piece of property at the cost of half his company. His men stood on the alert, with guns aimed at the impassive German, for the whole situation had a suspicion of treachery, which was accentuated rather than allayed by the exhibition of the white flag.

"How many guns have you got inside?" asked the officer.

"Sixdty."

The captain suppressed an exclamation of surprise. If

that were actually the case, he did not understand the surrender, and he now became anxious to hear the cheers of his comrades coming up the other side of the hill. "Boys," he said in a low voice to his company, "I don't like the looks of this. You'd better make for cover while I parley."

No man moved. "We've got this old skeezicks covered, captain. We're with you on this thing. If you come to cover, we will."

The German, smoking placidly, remembering the stern discipline of the German army, was amazed at the free and easy discussion going on before him.

"I accept the terms," said the captain; "we will neither destroy the mill nor the garrison. Bring your men out one by one, and make no mistake about telling them that they must leave their arms inside. If any man appears with a gun in his hand he will be shot. Do you understand?"

"Yaw," said the German, removing his pipe. Then he called over his shoulder in his own language, "Hans, put down your gun and come out."

The boy appeared on the balcony beside his father.

"Shentlemens, dot vas der garrison," said Steiner, with a complacent wave of his hand, the gesture of one who had amply fulfilled his contract.

"What do you mean? Where are your sixty men?"

"I dond zay I haf sixdty men; I zay I haf sixdty kuns. Dey vos inside."

"Who did all the shooting from this mill?"

"Dot vas me. Yaw; dot is all righdt."

"Oh, I say! This is some new kind of trap. I want six volunteers to enter the mill. Six men step forward."

The whole company took a pace in advance, as if on drill. The captain chose the half dozen nearest him, and they made a dash on the mill, all their comrades on the alert, expecting a fusilade. The German leaned on the rail and smoked, his boy standing beside him making no complaint of lack of excitement. After a few minutes of intense suspense one of the soldiers appeared at the upper window.

"Say, Captain, this shanty is loaded for bear. It's a regular arsenal; more Mausers and ammunition than you can shake a stick at, but there are no inhabitants that we can find."

"Yaw, dot's all ride," nodded Steiner in corroboration.

The six soldiers appeared on the balcony, their search concluded.

"Bring down the prisoner," said the captain.

Steiner, his boy close at his heels, came down to the ground between a pair of the searchers.

"Look here, my man," began the officer, "it is not true that you were alone in the mill. You will have to be careful what you say. Where are the rest of the Boers?"

"I am gareful vot I say. Und I haf der vord of an Englishman dot I am not to be hurted."

"You can't play on the word of an Englishman, if you lie to me. We are not English, but Canadian. I'll keep my word to you all right, but I'm not going to bend over backwards to do it. The English may be kinder to the Boers they capture than to their own men, but I give you warning I don't believe in that sort of thing. You're going to have a rocky road to travel if you don't speak the truth. I'll have you tied up in a hard knot, and you'll find our transport service very defective. Now, Mr. Boer, where are the rest of your comrades?"

"You are misdaken, sir," replied the prisoner calmly, "I am not a Poer, but a German. Der German Emperor is mine chief."

"Then what in thunder were you shooting at us for? The German Emperor is not in this quarrel."

"Vot in dunder, yaw und blitzen too, do you shoot at me for? I know der English, but der Kanadians I knows noddings apout. Vot haf you mit dis kvarrel to do so mooch more as me?"

Some of the Canadians laughed at this, and one of them said:

"You're up against an empire, old man. Didn't you know it? You should study geography a bit, and current politics too."

"Pay attention," commanded the captain sternly. "Where is the company that was firing at us from the ridge on the left?"

"Der vas no kompany. Dot vas mine liddle poy Hans who vas playing mit plack powder. He vants some fun on Gristmas Tay."

"Oh, that was it. The puffs of powder coincided remarkably with the coming of the bullets."

"Yaw; dot's ride. I shoots dem pullets."

"My personal opinion is that I should have you shot where you stand, but I'll leave the commanding officer to deal with you."

The dialogue was interrupted by cheers from the left. A section of the artillery came forward dragging a cannon. Then followed the ammunition train, and another squad of infantry. There were boisterous greetings, and sarcastic shouts of "Merry Christmas!" with congratulations that, despite all the firing, no one had been hurt.

"Where are the Boers?" was the cry of the newcomers.

"Important engagements elsewhere. Sorry they couldn't wait," was the reply.

"Well, I think as these chaps broke the arrangement about not firing on Christmas Day, they might have left us some turkey and plum pudding when they invited us by cannon post to come and see them."

"They are an inhospitable lot," growled another.

"Oh, no. They greeted us with a hot fire, and that has always been considered a welcoming token on Christmas Day at home. Besides, here's a can of coffee all nicely ready for you. What are you kicking about? You're never satisfied."

But other eyes were watching the jolly Kanucks besides those of the miller and his boy. There was a long shriek to the north and a shell came spinning over the mill, bursting in the valley far below, aimed too high, as usual.

"The same to you," cried the artillery lads, springing to their gun. The next shell carried away the white flag fluttering at the top of the mill. Far on the northern kopje rose the two clouds of white smoke.

The third and fourth shells went wide; the fifth sent the gaunt arms of the mill flying. The Canadian cannon had plumped a shell right into the distant cloud of smoke at the first trial: a triumph of range-finding. When the mill was struck the calm demeanor of the German dropped from him like a cloak.

"Oh, mine Gott!" he cried, "dose villains are shooding

at mine mill!" For a few moments he swore resounding German oaths, which had no influence on the shells; then he turned to the officer who commanded the gunners. "Oh, mine mill is ruinet. Of you dondt shoot dem Poers, dey smash mine mill. You vas shooding all wrong."

"You mind your own business, old man. Hang your mill. Take it away if the situation doesn't suit you; we'll attend to the shooting."

"Yaw, yaw, but dem Poers don't be some shackasses und stay mit dot smoke. Dey fool you all der time, ride away. Dot smoke is plack powder. Der gannon is on dot kop halef a mile to der right. It shoods from der bile of stones at der top. Dem Poers fool you mit der plack powder."

"I believe he is right," said the captain who had first arrived, to the officer of artillery. "I'm sure from something he said before that they have smokeless powder, and that these too evident explosions of black powder are entirely misleading."

The officer turned his glasses on the kopje pointed out by the miller. The indications were sufficiently suspicious, and he gave a sharp command to his men. The gun was veered round, the range taken, and the shell launched. The effect was instantaneous. No more shots came from the north, and the mill was saved. After thoroughly shelling the ridge and getting no reply, the cannonade ceased. The officer, through his glasses, saw the black nozzle of the Boer gun heave up into the air and fall out of sight. Whether this meant the dismounting of Long Tom or not, the cannon sent no more Christmas greetings that day. The sun was now getting low above the western hills, and the evening promised to be as chill as the day had been warm. The Canadians were wasteful of the Mauser rifles. They gathered these weapons from the mill and broke them, one by one, against a protruding rock. The cases of ammunition they put in a pile, smashing the boxes, and making a bonfire of the heap, which seemed a dangerous proceeding, but, as was the case with the battle, nobody was hurt, and the small boy had a wonderful exhibition of fireworks with which to usher in the close of his holiday.

The prisoner had resumed his pipe and his composure, now that the mill was safe. The captain approached him.

"I want you to answer a few questions. Are there any Boers in that village down below?"

"Nein. Eggesept women. Der men vas on der hills."

"You are sure of that? We don't want to trouble the women, but if there are men there, we're going to clear them out."

"Nein. Der vas no men dare."

"Do you think there is any chance of getting something to eat at the place? We'll pay for what we take."

"Yaw, dare is mooch to eat down dare."

"Well, I think they owe us a meal, having brought us this far."

A score of foragers were sent down the hill, but no chances were taken. They were supported by a company of armed men, and the cannon was held in readiness. However, the German had told the truth, and furthermore had convinced his captors that he had actually held off what he supposed was the British army, all by himself in the mill. They listened to him with great interest, and he branched off into recitals concerning his campaigns in France. In return, they told him there was a town called Berlin in Canada, and bestowed upon him much valuable geographical knowledge. The foragers brought back the materials for a satisfying meal, and while the soldiers were busily engaged in putting it where it would do the most good, the captain said quietly to the smoking German:

"You don't care to see Cape Town, do you?"

"Nein."

"Quite satisfied with the mill, eh? Well, I'll give you a hint. You had better look after it. If you and that promising boy of yours get up into that tower, perhaps you may be overlooked in the hurried search that will take place presently."

"All ride," said Steiner, quite unmoved.

Supper finished, sharp commands were given and obeyed. The troops lined up for their march to find their convoy.

"Where's the prisoner?" demanded the captain.

One of the soldiers saluted and spoke:

"Captain, the boys think the German is not half a bad

sort of fellow. He has given us important information, and his shooting didn't amount to much, so we thought—"

"All that has nothing to do with the case," returned the captain with severity. "If this outlaw isn't found inside of two minutes, you'll have to go off without him. I can't keep men waiting here all night, and it will soon be dark."

There was a droop of the captain's right eyelid, scarcely perceptible, but nevertheless noted by some of the quick-sighted chaps before him. A hasty search was at once inaugurated, but so successful was the miller's hiding that he could not be found within the time limit set. Therefore Her Majesty's forces marched off to the south without him.

THE CHRISTMAS WRECK*

By Frank R. Stockton

"Well, sir," said old Silas, as he gave a preliminary puff to the pipe he had just lighted, and so satisfied himself that the draught was all right, "the wind's a comin', an' so's Christmas. But it's no use bein' in a hurry fur either of 'em, fur sometimes they come afore you want 'em, anyway."

Silas was sitting in the stern of a small sailing boat which he owned, and in which he sometimes took the Sandport visitors out for a sail; and at other times applied to its more legitimate, but less profitable use, that of fishing. That afternoon he had taken young Mr. Nugent for a brief excursion on that portion of the Atlantic Ocean which sends its breakers up on the beach of Sandport. But he had found it much more difficult, nay, impossible, just now, to bring him back. For the wind had gradually died away until there was not a breath of it left. Mr. Nugent, to whom nautical experiences were as new as the very nautical suit of blue flannel which he wore, rather liked the calm; it was such a relief to the monotony of rolling waves. He took out a cigar and lighted it, and then he remarked:

"I can easily imagine how a wind might come before you sailors might want it, but I don't see how Christmas could come too soon."

"It come wunst on me when things couldn't 'a' looked more onready fur it," said Silas.

"How was that?" asked Mr. Nugent, settling himself a little more comfortably on the hard thwart. "If it's a story, let's have it. This is a good time to spin a yarn."

"Very well," said old Silas. "I'll spin her."

The bare-legged boy, whose duty it was to stay forward and mind the jib, came aft as soon as he smelt a story,

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and took a nautical position which was duly studied by Mr. Nugent, on a bag of ballast in the bottom of the boat.

"It's nigh on to fifteen year ago," said Silas, "that I was on the barque, *Mary Auguster,* bound for Sydney, New South Wales, with a cargo of canned goods. We was somewhere about longitude a hundred an' seventy, latitood nothin', an' it was the twenty-second o' December, when we was ketched by a reg'lar typhoon which blew straight along, end on, fur a day an' a half. It blew away the storm sails; it blew away every yard, spar, shroud, an' every strand of riggin', an' snapped the masts off, close to the deck; it blew away all the boats; it blew away the cook's caboose, an' everything else on deck; it blew off the hatches, an' sent 'em spinnin' in the air, about a mile to leeward; an' afore it got through, it washed away the cap'n an' all the crew 'cept me an' two others. These was Tom Simmons, the second mate, an' Andy Boyle, a chap from the Andirondock Mountains, who had never been to sea afore. As he was a landsman he ought, by rights, to 'a' been swep' off by the wind an' water, consid'rin' that the cap'n an' sixteen good seamen had gone a'ready. But he had hands eleven inches long, an' that give him a grip which no typhoon could git the better of. Andy had let out that his father was a miller up there in York state, an' a story had got round among the crew that his gran'father an' great-gran'father was millers too; an' the way the fam'ly got such big hands come from their habit of scoopin' up a extry quart or two of meal or flour for themselves when they was levelin' off their customers' measures. He was a good-natered feller, though, an' never got riled when I'd tell him to clap his flour-scoops onter a halyard.

"We was all soaked, an' washed, an' beat, an' battered. We held on some way or other till the wind blowed itself out, an' then we got on our legs an' began to look about us to see how things stood. The sea had washed into the open hatches till the vessel was more'n half full of water, an' that had sunk her so deep that she must 'a' looked like a canal boat loaded with gravel. We hadn't had a thing to eat or drink durin' that whole blow, an' we was pretty ravenous. We found a keg of water which was all right, and a box

of biscuit, which was what you might call soft tack, for they was soaked through and through with sea-water. We eat a lot of them so, fur we couldn't wait, an' the rest we spread on the deck to dry, fur the sun was now shinin' hot enough to bake bread. We couldn't go below much, fur there was a pretty good swell on the sea, and things was floatin' about so's to make it dangerous. But we fished out a piece of canvas, which we rigged up agin the stump of the mainmast so that we could have somethin' that we could sit down an' grumble under. What struck us all the hardest was that the barque was loaded with a whole cargo of jolly things to eat, which was just as good as ever they was, fur the water couldn't git through the tin cans in which they was all put up; an' here we was with nothin' to live on but them salted biscuit. There was no way of gittin' at any of the ship's stores, or any of the fancy prog, fur everythin' was stowed away tight under six or seven feet of water, an' pretty nigh all the room that was left between decks was filled up with extry spars, lumber, boxes, an' other floatin' stuff. All was shiftin', and bumpin', and bangin' every time the vessel rolled.

"As I said afore, Tom was second mate, an' I was bo's'n. Says I to Tom, 'the thing we've got to do is to put up some kind of a spar with a rag on it for a distress flag, so that we'll lose no time bein' took off.' 'There's no use a slavin' at anythin' like that,' says Tom, 'fur we've been blowed off the track of traders, an' the more we work the hungrier we'll git, an' the sooner will them biscuit be gone.'

"Now when I heerd Tom say this I sot still, and began to consider. Being second mate, Tom was, by rights, in command of this craft; but it was easy enough to see that if he commanded there'd never be nothin' for Andy an' me to do. All the grit he had in him he'd used up in holdin' on durin' that typhoon. What he wanted to do now was to make himself comfortable till the time come fur him to go to Davy Jones's Locker; an' thinkin', most likely, that Davy couldn't make it any hotter fur him than it was on that deck, still in latitood nothin' at all, fur we'd been blowed along the line pretty nigh due west. So I calls to

Andy, who was busy turnin' over the biscuits on the deck. 'Andy,' says I, when he had got under the canvas, 'we's goin' to have a 'lection fur skipper. Tom here is about played out. He's one candydate, an' I'm another. Now, who do you vote fur? An', mind yer eye, youngster, that you don't make no mistake.' 'I vote fur you,' says Andy. 'Carried unanermous!' says I. 'An' I want you to take notice that I'm cap'n of what's left of the *Mary Auguster,* an' you two has got to keep your minds on that, an' obey orders.' If Davy Jones was to do all that Tom Simmons said when he heard this, the old chap would be kept busier than he ever was yit. But I let him growl his growl out, knowin' he'd come round all right, fur there wasn't no help fur it, consid'rin' Andy an' me was two to his one. Pretty soon we all went to work, an' got up a spar from below which we rigged to the stump of the foremast, with Andy's shirt atop of it.

"Them sea-soaked, sun-dried biscuit was pretty mean prog, as you might think, but we eat so many of 'em that afternoon an' 'cordingly drank so much water that I was obliged to put us all on short rations the next day. 'This is the day before Christmas,' says Andy Boyle, 'an' tonight will be Christmas Eve, an' it's pretty tough fur us to be sittin' here with not even so much hard-tack as we want, an' all the time thinkin' that the hold of this ship is packed full of the gayest kind of good things to eat.' 'Shut up about Christmas!' says Tom Simmons. 'Them two youngsters of mine, up in Bangor, is havin' their toes and noses pretty nigh froze, I 'spect, but they'll hang up their stockin's all the same tonight, never thinkin' that their dad's bein' cooked alive on a empty stomach.' 'Of course they wouldn't hang 'em up,' says I, 'if they knowed what a fix you was in, but they don't know it, an' what's the use of grumblin' at 'em for bein' a little jolly.' 'Well,' says Andy, 'they couldn't be more jollier than I'd be if I could git at some of them fancy fixin's down the hold. I worked well on to a week at 'Frisco puttin' in them boxes, an' the names of the things was on the outside of most of 'em, an' I tell you what it is, mates, it made my mouth water, even then, to read 'em, an' I wasn't hungry nuther, havin' plenty to

eat three times a day. There was roast beef an' roast mutton, an' duck, an' chicken, an' soup, an' peas, an' beans, an' termaters, an' plum puddin', an' mince pie—' 'Shut up with your mince pie!' sang out Tom Simmons. 'Isn't it enough to have to gnaw on these salt chips, without hearin' about mince pie?' 'An' more'n that,' says Andy, 'there was canned peaches, an' pears, an' plums, an' cherries.'

"Now these things did sound so cool an' good to me on that broilin' deck that I couldn't stand it, an' I leans over to Andy, an' I says: 'Now look-a here, if you don't shut up talkin' about them things what's stowed below, an' what we can't git at, nohow, overboard you go!' 'That would make you short-handed,' says Andy, with a grin. 'Which is more'n you could say,' says I, 'if you'd chuck Tom an' me over'—alludin' to his eleven-inch grip. Andy didn't say no more then, but after a while he comes to me as I was lookin' round to see if anything was in sight, an' says he, 'I s'pose you ain't got nuthin' to say agin my divin' into the hold just aft of the foremast, where there seems to be a bit of pretty clear water, an' see if I can't git up something?' 'You kin do it if you like,' says I, 'but it's at your own risk. You can't take out no insurance at this office.' 'All right, then,' says Andy, 'an' if I git stove in by floatin' boxes, you an' Tom'll have to eat the rest of them salt crackers.' 'Now, boy,' says I—an' he wasn't much more, bein' only nineteen year old—'you'd better keep out o' that hold. You'll just git yourself smashed. An' as to movin' any of them there heavy boxes, which must be swelled up as tight as if they was part of the ship, you might as well try to pull out one of the *Mary Auguster's* ribs.' 'I'll try it,' says Andy, 'fur tomorrer is Christmas, an' if I kin help it I ain't goin' to be floatin' atop of a Christmas dinner without eatin' any on it.' I let him go, fur he was a good swimmer and diver, an' I did hope he might root out somethin' or other, fur Christmas is about the worst day in the year fur men to be starvin' on, and that's what we was a-comin' to.

"Well, fur about two hours Andy swum, an' dove, an' come up blubberin', an' dodged all sorts of floatin' an' pitchin' stuff, fur the swell was still on; but he couldn't

even be so much as sartain that he'd found the canned vittles. To dive down through hatchways, an' among broken bulkheads, to hunt fur any partiklar kind o' boxes under seven feet of sea-water, ain't no easy job; an' though Andy says he got hold of the end of a box that felt to him like the big 'uns he'd noticed as havin' the meat pies in, he couldn't move it no more'n if it had been the stump of the foremast. If we could have pumped the water out of the hold we could have got at that part of the cargo we wanted, but as it was, we couldn't even reach the ship's stores, which, of course, must have been mostly spiled anyway; whereas the canned vittles was just as good as new. The pumps was all smashed, or stopped up, for we tried 'em, but if they hadn't a-been we three couldn't never have pumped out that ship on three biscuit a day, and only about two days' rations at that.

"So Andy he come up, so fagged out that it was as much as he could do to get his clothes on, though they wasn't much, an' then he stretched himself out under the canvas an' went to sleep, an' it wasn't long afore he was talkin' about roast turkey an' cranberry sass, an' punkin pie, an' sech stuff, most of which we knowed was under our feet that present minute. Tom Simmons he just b'iled over, an' sung out: 'Roll him out in the sun and let him cook! I can't stand no more of this!' But I wasn't goin' to have Andy treated no sech way as that, fur if it hadn't been fur Tom Simmons' wife an' young uns, Andy'd been worth two of him to anybody who was consid'rin' savin' life. But I give the boy a good punch in the ribs to stop his dreamin', fur I was as hungry as Tom was, and couldn't stand no nonsense about Christmas dinners.

"It was a little arter noon when Andy woke up, an' he went outside to stretch himself. In about a minute he give a yell that made Tom and me jump. 'A sail!' he hollered, 'a sail!' An' you may bet your life, young man, that 'twasn't more'n half a second before us two had scuffled out from under that canvas, an' was standin' by Andy. 'There she is!' he shouted, 'not a mile to win'ard.' I give one look, an' then I sings out: ' 'Tain't a sail! It's a flag of distress! Can't you see, you land-lubber, that that's the

Stars and Stripes upside down?' 'Why, so it is,' said Andy, with a couple of reefs in the joyfulness of his voice. An' Tom, he began to growl as if somebody had cheated him out of half a year's wages.

"The flag that we saw was on the hull of a steamer that had been driftin' down on us while we was sittin' under our canvas. It was plain to see she'd been caught in the typhoon too, fur there wasn't a mast or a smokestack on her; but her hull was high enough out of the water to catch what wind there was, while we was so low-sunk that we didn't make no way at all. There was people aboard, and they saw us, an' waved their hats an' arms, an' Andy an' me waved ours, but all we could do was to wait till they drifted nearer, fur we hadn't no boats to go to 'em if we'd 'a' wanted to.

" 'I'd like to know what good that old hulk is to us,' said Tom Simmons. 'She can't take us off.' It did look to me somethin' like the blind leadin' the blind; but Andy he sings out: 'We'd be better off aboard of her, fur she ain't water-logged, an', more'n that, I don't s'pose her stores are all soaked up in salt water.' There was some sense in that, and when the steamer had got to within half a mile of us, we was glad to see a boat put out from her with three men in it. It was a queer boat, very low an' flat, an' not like any ship's boat I ever see. But the two fellers at the oars pulled stiddy, an' pretty soon the boat was 'longside of us, an' the three men on our deck. One of 'em was the first mate of the other wreck, an' when he found out what was the matter with us, he spun his yarn, which was a longer one than ours. His vessel was the *Water Crescent,* nine hundred tons, from 'Frisco to Melbourne, and they had sailed about six weeks afore we did. They was about two weeks out when some of their machinery broke down, an' when they got it patched up it broke agin, worse than afore, so that they couldn't do nothin' with it. They kept along under sail for about a month, makin' mighty poor headway till the typhoon struck 'em, an' that cleaned their decks off about as slick as it did ours, but their hatches wasn't blowed off, an' they didn't ship no water wuth mentionin', an' the crew kep' below, so that

none on 'em was lost. But now they was clean out of provisions and water, havin' been short when the breakdown happened, fur they had sold all the stores they could spare to a French brig in distress that they overhauled when about a week out. When they sighted us they felt pretty sure they'd git some provisions out of us. But when I told the mate what a fix we was in his jaw dropped till his face was as long as one of Andy's hands. Howsomdever he said he'd send the boat back fur as many men as it could bring over, and see if they couldn't get up some of our stores. Even if they was soaked with salt water, they'd be better than nothin'. Part of the cargo of the *Water Crescent* was tools an' things fur some railway contractors out in Australier, an' the mate told the men to bring over some of them irons that might be used to fish out the stores. All their ship's boats had been blowed away, an' the one they had was a kind of shore boat for fresh water, that had been shipped as part of the cargo, an' stowed below. It couldn't stand no kind of a sea, but there wasn't nothin' but a swell on; an' when it come back it had the cap'n in it, an' five men, besides a lot of chains an' tools.

"Them fellers an' us worked pretty nigh the rest of the day, an' we got out a couple of bar'ls of water, which was all right, havin' been tight bunged; an' a lot of sea biscuit, all soaked an' sloppy, but we only got a half bar'l of meat, though three or four of the men stripped an' dove fur more'n an hour. We cut up some of the meat, an' eat it raw, an' the cap'n sent some over to the other wreck, which had drifted past us to leeward, an' would have gone clean away from us if the cap'n hadn't had a line got out an' made us fast to it while we was workin' at the stores.

"That night the cap'n took us three, as well as the provisions we'd got out, on board his hull, where the 'commodations was consid'able better than they was on the half-sunk *Mary Auguster.* An' afore we turned in he took me aft, an' had a talk with me as commandin' off'cer of my vessel. 'That wreck o' yourn,' says he, 'has got a vallyble cargo in it, which isn't spiled by bein' under water. Now, if you could get that cargo into port it would put a lot of money in your pocket, fur the owners couldn't git out of

payin' you fur takin' charge of it, an' havin' it brung in. Now I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll lie by you, an' I've got carpenters aboard that'll put your pumps in order, an' I'll set my men to work to pump out your vessel. An' then, when she's afloat all right, I'll go to work agin at my vessel, which I didn't s'pose there was any use o' doin'; but whilst I was huntin' round amongst our cargo today I found that some of the machinery we carried might be worked up so's to take the place of what is broke in our engine. We've got a forge aboard an' I believe we can make these pieces of machinery fit, an' git goin' agin. Then I'll tow you into Sydney, an' we'll divide the salvage money. I won't git nothin' for savin' my vessel, coz that's my bizness; but you wasn't cap'n o' yourn, an' took charge of her a purpose to save her, which is another thing.'

"I wasn't at all sure that I didn't take charge of the *Mary Auguster* to save myself an' not the vessel, but I didn't mention that, an' asked the cap'n how he expected to live all this time. 'Oh, we kin git at your stores easy enough,' says he, 'when the water's pumped out.' 'They'll be mostly sp'iled,' says I. 'That don't matter,' says he, 'men'll eat anythin', when they can't git nothin' else.' An' with that he left me to think it over.

"I must say, young man, an' you kin b'lieve me if you know anythin' about sech things, that the idee of a pile of money was mighty temptin' to a feller like me, who had a girl at home ready to marry him, and who would like nothin' better'n to have a little house of his own, an' a little vessel of his own, an' give up the other side of the world altogether. But while I was goin' over all this in my mind, an' wonderin' if the cap'n ever could git us into port, along comes Andy Boyle, and sits down beside me. 'It drives me pretty nigh crazy,' says he, 'to think that tomorrer's Christmas, an' we've got to feed on that sloppy stuff we fished out of our stores, an' not much of it nuther, while there's all that roast turkey, an' plum puddin', an' mince pie, a floatin' out there just before our eyes, an' we can't have none of it.' 'You hadn't oughter think so much about eatin', Andy,' says I, 'but if I was talkin' about them things I wouldn't leave out canned peaches. By George! Of a

hot Christmas like this is goin' to be, I'd be the jolliest Jack on the ocean if I could git at that canned fruit.' 'Well, there's a way,' says Andy, 'that we might git some of 'em. A part of the cargo of this ship is stuff for blastin' rocks; catridges, 'lectric batt'ries, an' that sort of things; an' there's a man aboard who's goin' out to take charge of 'em. I've been talkin' to this bat'ry man, an' I've made up my mind it'll be easy enough to lower a little catridge down among our cargo, an' blow out a part of it.' 'What ud be the good of it,' says I, 'blowed into chips?' 'It might smash some,' he said, 'but others would be only loosened, an' they'd float up to the top, where we could get 'em, 'specially them as was packed with pies, which must be pretty light.' 'Git out, Andy,' says I, 'with all that stuff!' An' he got out.

"But the idees he'd put into my head didn't git out, an' as I laid on my back on the deck, lookin' up at the stars, they sometimes seemed to put themselves into the shape of little houses, with a little woman cookin' at the kitchin fire, an' a little schooner layin' at anchor just off shore; an' then agin they'd hump themselves up till they looked like a lot of new tin cans with their tops off, an' all kinds of good things to eat inside, 'specially canned peaches—the big white kind—soft an' cool, each one split in half, with a holler in the middle filled with juice. By George, sir, the very thought of a tin can like that made me beat my heels agin the deck. I'd been mighty hungry, an' had eat a lot of salt pork, wet an' raw, an' now the very idee of it, even cooked, turned my stomach. I looked up to the stars agin, an' the little house an' the little schooner was clean gone, an' the whole sky was filled with nothin' but bright new tin cans.

"In the mornin', Andy, he come to me agin. 'Have you made up your mind,' says he, 'about gittin' some of them good things for Christmas dinner?' 'Confound you!' says I, 'you talk as if all we had to do was to go an' git 'em.' 'An' that's what I b'lieve we kin do,' says he, 'with the help of that bat'ry man.' 'Yes,' says I, 'an' blow a lot of the cargo into flinders, an' damage the *Mary Auguster* so's she couldn't never be took into port.' An' then I told him what the cap'n had said to me, an' what I was goin' to do with

the money. 'A little catridge,' says Andy, 'would do all we want, an' wouldn't hurt the vessel nuther. Besides that, I don't b'lieve what this cap'n says about tinkerin' up his engin'. 'Tain't likely he'll ever git her runnin' agin, nor pump out the *Mary Auguster* nuther. If I was you I'd a durned sight ruther have a Christmas dinner in hand than a house an' wife in the bush.' 'I ain't thinkin' o' marryin' a girl in Australier,' says I. An' Andy he grinned, an' said I wouldn't marry nobody if I had to live on spiled vittles till I got her.

"A little after that I went to the cap'n, an' I told him about Andy's idee, but he was down on it. 'It's your vessel, an' not mine,' says he, 'an' if you want to try to git a dinner out of her I'll not stand in your way. But it's my 'pinion you'll just damage the ship, an' do nothin'.' Howsomdever I talked to the bat'ry man about it, an' he thought it could be done, an' not hurt the ship nuther. The men was all in favor of it, for none of 'em had forgot it was Christmas Day. But Tom Simmons, he was agin it strong, for he was thinkin' he'd git some of the money if we got the *Mary Auguster* into port. He was a selfish-minded man, was Tom, but it was his nater, an' I s'pose he couldn't help it.

"Well, it wasn't long afore I began to feel pretty empty, an' mean, an' if I'd a wanted any of the prog we got out the day afore, I couldn't have found much, for the men had eat it nearly all up in the night. An' so I just made up my mind without any more foolin', an' me, an' Andy Boyle, an' the bat'ry man, with some catridges an' a coil of wire, got into the little shore boat, an' pulled over to the *Mary Auguster.* There we lowered a small catridge down the main hatchway, an' let it rest down among the cargo. Then we rowed back to the steamer, uncoilin' the wire as we went. The bat'ry man clumb up on deck, an' fixed his wire to a 'lectric machine, which he'd got all ready afore we started. Andy an' me didn't git out of the boat; we had too much sense for that, with all them hungry fellers waitin' to jump in her; but we just pushed a little off, an' sot waitin', with our mouths a waterin', for him to touch her off. He seemed to be a long time about it, but at last he did it, an' that instant there was a bang on board the

Mary Auguster that made my heart jump. Andy an' me pulled fur her like mad, the others a hollerin' arter us, an' we was on deck in no time. The deck was all covered with the water that had been throwed up; but I tell you, sir, that we poked an' fished about, an' Andy stripped an' went down, an' swum all round, an' we couldn't find one floatin' box of canned goods. There was a lot of splinters, but where they come from we didn't know. By this time my dander was up, an' I just pitched around savage. That little catridge wasn't no good, an' I didn't intend to stand any more foolin'. We just rowed back to the other wreck, an' I called to the bat'ry man to come down, an' bring some bigger catridges with him, fur if we was goin' to do anythin' we might as well do it right. So he got down with a package of bigger ones, an' jumped into the boat. The cap'n he called out to us to be keerful, an' Tom Simmons leaned over the rail, an' swored, but I didn't pay no 'tention to neither of 'em, an' we pulled away.

"When I got aboard the *Mary Auguster* I says to the bat'ry man: 'We don't want no nonsense this time, an' I want you to put in enough catridges to heave up somethin' that'll do fur a Christmas dinner. I don't know just how the cargo is stored, but you kin put one big catridge 'midship, another for'ard, an' another aft, an' one or nuther of 'em oughter fetch up somethin'.' Well, we three got the catridges into place. They was a good deal bigger than the one we first used, an' we j'ined 'em all to one wire, an' then we rowed back, carryin' the long wire with us. When we reached the steamer, me an' Andy was a-goin' to stay in the boat as we did afore, but the cap'n sung out that he wouldn't allow the bat'ry to be touched off till we come aboard. 'Ther's got to be fair play,' says he. 'It's your vittles, but it's my side that's doin' the work. After we've blasted her this time you two can go in the boat, an' see what there is to get hold of, but two of my men must go along.' So me an' Andy had to go on deck, an' two big fellers was detailed to go with us in the little boat when the time come; an' then the bat'ry man, he teched her off.

"Well, sir, the pop that followed that tech was somethin' to remember. It shuck the water, it shuck the air,

an' it shuck the hull we was on. A reg'lar cloud of smoke an' flyin' bits of things rose up out of the *Mary Auguster.* An' when that smoke cleared away, an' the water was all bilin' with the splash of various sized hunks that come rainin' down from the sky, what was left of the *Mary Auguster* was sprinkled over the sea like a wooden carpet for water birds to walk on.

"Some of the men sung out one thing, an' some another, an' I could hear Tom Simmons swear, but Andy an' me said never a word, but scuttled down into the boat, follered close by the two men who was to go with us. Then we rowed like devils for the lot of stuff that was bobbin' about on the water, out where the *Mary Auguster* had been. In we went, among the floatin' spars and ship's timbers, I keepin' the things off with an oar, the two men rowin', an' Andy in the bow.

"Suddenly Andy give a yell, an' then he reached himself for'ard with sech a bounce that I thought he'd go overboard. But up he come in a minnit, his two 'leven-inch hands gripped round a box. He sot down in the bottom of the boat with the box on his lap, an' his eyes screwed on some letters that was stamped on one end. 'Pidjin pies!' he sings out. ' 'Tain't turkeys, nor 'tain't cranberries. But, by the Lord Harry, it's Christmas pies all the same!' After that Andy didn't do no more work, but sot holdin' that box as if it had been his fust baby. But we kept pushin' on to see what else there was. It's my 'pinion that the biggest part of that barque's cargo was blowed into mince meat, an' the most of the rest of it was so heavy that it sunk. But it wasn't all busted up, an' it didn't all sink. There was a big piece of wreck with a lot of boxes stove into the timbers, and some of these had in 'em beef ready biled an' packed into cans, an' there was other kinds of meat, an' dif'rent sorts of vegetables, an' one box of turtle soup. I looked at every one of 'em as we took 'em in, an' when we got the little boat pretty well loaded I wanted to still keep on searchin', but the men, they said that shore boat ud sink if we took in any more cargo, an' so we put back, I feelin' glummer'n I oughter felt, fur I had begun to be afeared that canned fruit, such as peaches, was heavy, an' li'ble to sink.

"As soon as we had got our boxes aboard, four fresh men put out in the boat, an' after awhile they come back with another load; an' I was mighty keerful to read the names on all the boxes. Some was meat pies, an' some was salmon, an' some was potted herrin's, an' some was lobsters. But nary a thing could I see that ever had growed on a tree.

"Well, sir, there was three loads brought in, altogether, an' the Christmas dinner we had on the for'ard deck of that steamer's hull was about the jolliest one that was ever seen of a hot day aboard of a wreck in the Pacific Ocean. The cap'n kept good order, an' when all was ready the tops was jerked off the boxes, an' each man grabbed a can an' opened it with his knife. When he had cleaned it out, he tuk another without doin' much questionin' as to the bill of fare. Whether anybody got pidjin pie 'cept Andy, I can't say, but the way we piled in Delmoniker prog would 'a' made people open their eyes as was eatin' their Christmas dinners on shore that day. Some of the things would 'a' been better, cooked a little more, or het up, but we was too fearful hungry to wait for that, an' they was tip-top as they was.

"The cap'n went out afterwards, an' towed in a couple of bar'ls of flour that was only part soaked through, an' he got some other plain prog that would do for future use; but none of us give our minds to stuff like this arter the glorious Christmas dinner that we'd quarried out of the *Mary Auguster*. Every man that wasn't on duty went below, and turned in for a snooze. All 'cept me, an' I didn't feel just altogether satisfied. To be sure I'd had an A1 dinner, an' though a little mixed, I'd never eat a jollier one on any Christmas that I kin look back at. But, fur all that, there was a hanker inside o' me. I hadn't got all I'd laid out to git, when we teched off the *Mary Auguster*. The day was blazin' hot, an' a lot of the things I'd eat was pretty peppery. 'Now,' thinks I, 'if there had a-been just one can o' peaches sech as I see shinin' in the stars last night,' an' just then, as I was walkin' aft, all by myself, I seed, lodged on the stump of the mizzenmast, a box with one corner druv down among the splinters. It was half split open, an' I could see the tin cans shinin'

through the crack. I give one jump at it, an' wrenched the side off. On the top of the first can I seed was a picture of a big white peach with green leaves. That box had been blowed up so high that if it had come down anywhere 'cept among them splinters it would 'a' smashed itself to flinders, or killed somebody. So fur as I know, it was the only thing that fell nigh us, an' by George, sir, I got it! When I had finished a can of 'em I hunted up Andy, an' then we went aft, an' eat some more. 'Well,' says Andy, as we was a-eatin', 'how d'ye feel now about blowin' up your wife, an' your house, an' that little schooner you was goin' to own?'

" 'Andy,' says I, 'this is the joyfulest Christmas I've had yit, an' if I was to live till twenty hundred I don't b'lieve I'd have no joyfuler, with things comin' in so pat, so don't you throw no shadders.'

" 'Shadders,' says Andy, 'that ain't me. I leave that sort of thing fur Tom Simmons.'

" 'Shadders is cool,' says I, 'an' I kin go to sleep under all he throws.' "

"Well, sir," continued old Silas, putting his hand on the tiller and turning his face seaward, "if Tom Simmons had kept command of that wreck, we all would 'a' laid there an' waited an' waited till some of us was starved, an' the others got nothin' fur it, fur the cap'n never mended his engine, an' it was more'n a week afore we was took off, an' then it was by a sailin' vessel, which left the hull of the *Water Crescent* behind her, just as she would 'a' had to leave the *Mary Auguster* if that jolly old Christmas wreck had a-been there.

"An' now, sir," said Silas, "d'ye see that stretch o' little ripples over yander, lookin' as if it was a lot o' herrin' turnin' over to dry their sides? Do you know what that is? That's the supper wind. That means coffee, an' hot cakes, an' a bit of br'iled fish an' pertaters, an' p'raps—if the old woman feels in a partiklar good humor—some canned peaches, big white uns, cut in half, with a holler place in the middle filled with cool, sweet juice."

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